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SELECTIONS FOR AMATEUR AND  
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# A WIFE BY ADVERTISEMENT.

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## CHARACTERS.

CLYDE CLYNTON, of the Custom House.

MADGE CLYNTON, his wife.

JACK CLYNTON, his brother.

VALERIE DE VIGNE, an adventuress.

JAMES, a servant.

DETECTIVE.

---

*Scene.—Nicely furnished room in CLYDE CLYNTON's house, Rose Grove, Fordham. CLYDE and MADGE discovered at Breakfast.*

MADGE. Well, Clyde dear, you haven't to go to that odious Custom House to-day, have you? So we shall have *one more* day together. I don't know what I shall do when you go back. Only fancy, it will seem so dreadful your being away from ten till four every day!

CLYDE. Hardly so bad as that, ducky; you know I never go till nearly eleven o'clock, and nearly always return about half-past two or three.

MADGE. Yes; but consider how terribly hard you have to work during that time. Now, what *do* you really do in the office?

CLYDE. Well, dearest, I make it a rule to read whatever's interesting in the "Times" and the "Herald," first of all, then I go and get a glass of lager, and smoke a weed, and then——

MADGE. (*Anxiously*). What then?

CLYDE. Oh! then I go back and look through the other papers, do a little writing, and come home.

MADGE. And you are expected to do *all that* for \$2000 a-year? It's preposterous. Really shameful.

CLYDE. Yes, my dear, it is; but do you know, I sometimes think that I might do worse, for I have my evenings free, and manage to make another thousand by writing critiques, musical and theatrical, for the papers, which same writing I manage to do, between times, in the office. Now there's my poor young brother, Jack, he's in the Patent Office, and has any amount of work to do, a great deal harder than mine, and he only gets \$1000 a-year for it. Poor old Jack, I wonder what his next craze will be? You know, pet, that Jack is always going in for something fresh.

(*A knock at the door. CLYDE calls*) Come in. (*A pause, and then louder*) Come in. (*Another pause—he shouts*) COME IN! (*Enter JAMES R. D.*)

CLYDE. (*Angrily*). Why the Dickens didn't you come in when I told you?

JAMES. (*Rubbing his hands*). Well, sir—You see, sir—I've been in a goodish many situations, sir—and you see, sir, newly married couples, sir——

CLYDE. (*In a rage*). Newly married fools.

JAMES. Yes, sir; certainly, sir; newly married *fools*, sir, don't usually like servants to come in too quick, sir.

CLYDE. What the Dickens do you mean?—do you dare to insinuate that I am—am—am—a FOOL?

JAMES. Oh, sir! no, sir! certainly not, sir; I hopes I knows—(*In trepidation*)—my place, sir; and if you please, sir, a boy brought this letter, sir, he says it's from the Patent Office, sir—

MADGE. The Patent Officer?—does he mean some new kind of an officer.

JAMES. Oh, no, miss.

CLYDE. Dash it all, sir, your mistress is *not* a miss.

JAMES. No, sir, I shouldn't think as how she was amiss, sir! I thinks that on the *contrairy* she's rather pretty, sir.

CLYDE. Confound your impudence; this is intolerable. Give me the letter, and go to the devil.

MADGE. This is going too far; I won't listen any longer. (*Exit L. D.*)

JAMES. (*Giving letter*). Yes, sir; certainly, sir. Will you pay my fare, sir?

CLYDE. You're very near to a fool.

JAMES. (*Edging close up to CLYDE*). Yes, sir, I think I am, sir.

CLYDE. Get out of this, will you?

JAMES. Yes, sir; the boy's waiting, sir.

CLYDE. Go to the devil.

JAMES. Yes, sir; I'll tell him you're coming, sir. (*Exit R. D.*)

CLYDE *tears open the letter, and reads aside*:—

"Dear Clyde,—I have been and gone and done it at last." I guess it ain't the first time. "I have gone in a buster." The Dickens he has. "I have advertised in "Matrimonial Times" as follows." Phew—w—w. "A gentleman of good family, and most prepossessing appearance, 24 years of age, tall, fair, with blue eyes and auburn hair." Auburn hair! "and of most gentle and loving disposition, wishes to meet with a lady who has a moderate income of her own, with a view to matrimony." Oh, Law! "C. J., No. 1024, this office." Well, old man, I got no less than five hundred and eighty-six replies, half of which enclosed portraits—one of them was grand. It was from Mrs. Valerie De Vigne, a widow without encumbrances, and \$3000 a-year, more or less." Yes, especially less, I'll bet. "She wants to marry just such a young fellow as I. Of course she asked for an appointment. What was I to do; a poor beggar living in furnished apartments, consisting of one small bed-room; I couldn't ask her there!" I suppose not. "So I told her I was living at Rose Grove, Fordham," Dash it! that's here. "and should be glad to see her on the 25th," Confound it, that's to-day. "at 12 o'clock." (*Looking at watch.*) And it's half-past eleven now. "I applied for leave, but have failed to get it; so you must see her for me, and explain and all that, and I will come round at two. Till then, your affectionate brother, Jack." Well, here's a pretty kettle of fish. What will Madge say? I can't tell her that Jack's made such a dunce of himself. (*Enter MADGE L. D.*) I must dissemble—Ah, Madge!—a lady is coming to see me on business at 12 o'clock; will you kindly see that—

MADGE. (*Angrily*). A lady! what do you mean, sir? Only just married to me, and receiving letters from ladies, making appointments under this very roof. It's shameful!—It's horrible!—I won't allow it, sir!

CLYDE. (*In mock tragic tones*). Now, Madge, just listen. It is not an affair of my own: it is about a "government contract" I have to see her. I would willingly tell you all about it, but my duty to my country seals my lips. I have to see her, and Jack has to see her—he is com-

ing for that purpose at two o'clock. The fate of this great country depends upon our secrecy.

MADGE. Oh, very well, I will retire when she arrives. (*Aside*). And if I don't listen through the keyhole to all you say, I'm not a woman.

CLYDE *walks across the room, takes a pipe from a rack, fills it, lights it and tries to smoke, finds it won't draw.*

CLYDE. Have you a hairpin, Madge?

MADGE. No! I don't hairpin to have one—

CLYDE. Oh! well then, I suppose it's "needles" to ask you.

MADGE. Oh! I wonder you don't keep one specially for your nasty old pipe.

CLYDE. It's not a nasty old pipe; it's my best friend.

MADGE. Then I count for nothing—Oh—oh—(*Takes out her handkerchief and commences to cry*).

CLYDE. (*Sympathetically*). Now, don't be foolish, Madge; of course you are very much more than a friend. You are my ownest own, my duckey, darling wifey, and no one can ever be preferred to you!

MADGE. Then if that is true, I won't cry any more. (*Loud knock at door R.*)

CLYDE (*shouts*) Come in.

Enter JAMES. Please, sir, a lady to see you, sir; (*aside*) and aint she a flash 'un neither. Oh, no! not at all.

CLYDE. Show her up at once, James. Madge, my darling, will you kindly retire? (*Exit JAMES R. D. MADGE L. D.*)

CLYDE. By Jove! suppose she takes me for Jack. Happy thought: I'll pretend I am Jack, and find out all I can about her,—Ah, here she comes (*rushes to glass, arranges his hair and moustache*).

(*Enter R. D. VALERIE, followed closely by JAMES; she rushes to CLYDE and seizes his hand*).

VAL. Oh, Mr. Clynton, if you but knew how I have longed for this moment.

JAMES. (*Aside*). Well, if that aint warm. Strikes me, I've heard that voice before, and she's *just* about the height of that sister of mine that went to be housekeeper to old Fitznoodle.

CLYDE. (*Discovering JAMES*). James, how dare you enter without being called? Leave the room at once, or I'll—

JAMES. Oh, Law!—Oh, Law!—aint his temper up neither. (*Exit JAMES R. D.*)

VAL. Now, Mr. Clynton, now we have met, I think you are even better and nicer than I had imagined, and I feel sure that we shall be very happy together.

CLYDE. Do you, though?

VAL. Yes, I do. Don't you?

CLYDE. Well, you see, I can't see what you are like.

VAL. (*Raising her veil*). Now, sir, will I do?

CLYDE. (*Aside*). She's devilish pretty, but rather too much paint. (*To VAL*). Yes, you may; but of course you know we've got a lot to talk about, and to see more of each other before we settle matters.

VAL. Oh, yes, of course we have. In the first place I must tell you that when I married my poor dear Mr—ah—Jones.

CLYDE. Jones? I thought his name was De Vigne?

VAL. Of course. You see, Jack, the excitement of this meeting is too much for me, driving my head all topsy-turvy; fancy my forgetting the name of my husband. It's quite too awfully absurd, now, isn't it?

CLYDE. Yes; yes. Quite too—too—utterly, intensely ah—consummately absurd—(aside)—and very suspicious, too.

VAL. Oh, Jack! do you go in for æsthetics then? I do so love æsthetics.

CLYDE. Oh, you do—do you? (Aside). She's an impostor; I must manage to dismiss her and save my brother. (Knock at the door, R.)

CLYDE. Dash it! it's—Oh, I am sure—I beg your pardon—Come in. (Enter JAMES R. D.)

JAMES. Please, sir, missus sent me to say—(VAL starts)—would you like some wine sent in.

CLYDE. Wine, not—Ah, yes, of course by all means; yes, send it—that is, bring it in. (Aside). Just the thing: I'll give her an over-dose and find out all. (Exit JAMES R. D.)

VAL. What did I hear?—his mistress sent him! Who is that, Jack? Are you—ma—ma—ma—married already?

CLYDE. My wife—no—my sister keeps house for me. You see, the excitement of this meeting is driving things topsy-turvy in MY mind now. (Another knock). Come in. (Enter JAMES with refreshments R. D.)

VAL. You will introduce me to your sister, I hope?

CLYDE. Not I—that is—oh yes, of course.

JAMES. (Aside). His sister—whatever is the game? And her voice, too. I am almost certain it is my sister. I'll get round to the front and look at her. (Creeps round; VAL looks at him, then drops her veil).

JAMES. (Aside). I could almost swear to it! I'll watch—I'll go in the next room and look through the keyhole. No, I can't though; 'cause missus is a-doin that.—Oh, I know! I'll pop in suddenly, without knockin', and I'll catch her then, I'll warrant.

CLYDE. Now, James, what are you waiting for? You can go.

JAMES. Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. (Aside.) I'll catch you yet, Miss Jemima, see if I don't. (Exit R. D.)

VAL. helps herself to a glass of wine; drinks it off. CLYDE starts.

CLYDE. (Aside). Well, she's a bold one.

VAL. Well, Jack, as I was saying, when I married poor Jo—De Vigne, I was only a girl. We lived most happily together, and when he died he left me all his fortune, which brings me in about \$2000.

CLYDE. Ah, yes! just the same as my salary at the Custom House.

VAL. But I thought you said you were in the Patent Office, and only got \$1000 a-year.

CLYDE. Yes, of course, I meant the same as my younger—that is, elder brother gets at the Custom House—so that it, it's necessary for my brother—I mean for ME, to get married to someone with a little money of her own.

MADGE. (From other room). Oh! you brute, YOU.

CLYDE and VAL. both jump from their seats.

VAL. What was that?

CLYDE. Oh, ah! my sister talking to the dog in the next room, I expect, that's all

MADGE from the next room screams.

CLYDE. Oh! the brute must have bitten her. I must go and see. (Exit in haste L. D.)

VAL. 'Tis all very strange. I almost believe he is as big a swindler

as myself; but what am I to do? I *must* get married, and that quickly; for, with a husband, nobody would suspect me of being Jemima Jones, Fitznoodle's housekeeper, who ran off with all his portable property during his absence at Newport. And those horrible detectives too, they are following me, I know, but I will throw them off the track yet.

MADGE. (*Screaming in next room*). Go away, you brute, leave me at once; go back to that woman.

VAL. What's that I hear? I must listen.—(*Goes to keyhole: suddenly starts away again*). What's that? Oh, the wretch, he calls her his darling wife; he's married already. (*Faints. Enter JAMES, R. D.*)

JAMES. Now madam, or miss, we'll see who you are. (*Goes up to VAL. and raises her veil*). Yes! it is as I thought, my long lost sister.

*Enter R. D. CLYDE and MADGE, arm-in-arm.*

CLYDE. What are you doing there, James?

JAMES. A-looking at my sister, sir.

CLYDE and MADGE together. Your sister?

JAMES. Yes, my sister.

CLYDE. Then it's clear she's an impostor.

JAMES. Did she say as how she warn't my sister then?

CLYDE. No, but she said she was somebody else, which is much the same thing.

JAMES. Oh, Law! Oh, Law! Sharper than a serpent's sister it are to have an ungrateful tooth. No, that aint it, I'm wrong somewhere. (*Knock at door, R.*)

CLYDE calls Come in. (*Enter DETECTIVE R. D.*)

CLYDE. Well, sir, what's your business?

DETECTIVE. I am a detective from the Central Office, and from information received—

JAMES. Oh, Law! that's a fine saying, and quite new too; I'll put it down. (*Takes out pocket-book*).

CLYDE. Shut up.

JAMES. (*Writing*). Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. From i-n in f-o-r for m-a-y may s-h-u-n tion information r-e r-e s-e-e see e-v-e-d eved, from information received I shuts up.

DETECTIVE. Well, sir, we have been informed that a lady that we want, has been seen to enter this house, and—Oh, there she is—(*Crosses to VAL., who has just recovered*). Miss Jemima Jones, you are my prisoner on a charge of robbery.

JAMES. Oh, Law! from information received, I casts her off. She aint no longer my sister. (*Enter JACK in a hurry, R. D.*)

JACK. Clyde, old man, congratulate me, my salary is raised to \$2000 at last, and I shan't have to marry a "Matrimonial Times" wife after all, but go in the country, and espouse my dear little cousin Lillie, whom I have loved all my life.

CLYDE. We congratulate you, old boy, most heartily, though you have put us in a pretty kettle of fish here. Here's this Mrs. Valerie De Vigne, *alias* James's sister—

JAMES. No she aint; from inflammation—no, *information* received I casts her off.

CLYDE. Well, then, this *person* comes here, mistakes me for you, puts Madge in no end of a way, and finishes up by getting arrested for robbery. Let this be a warning, and if you happen to want a wife again, don't try to get one by advertisement.

CURTAIN.

# CAUGHT AT LAST.

## CHARACTERS.

LORD WARTON a fond, irritable father.

MABEL, his wilful daughter.

COSMO D'YNCOURT, her cousin and lover.

SCENE—*Drawing-Room in LORD WARTON'S House. LORD WARTON and COSMO D'YNCOURT in earnest conversation.*

LORD W. (*irritably.*) Of course, I know you are a connection of ours; I don't dispute that fact. (*Clears his throat after a fussy manner.*) (Erhum! Erhum!) In fact, you are quite justified in calling yourself her cousin—after a fashion, after a fashion (Erhum! Erhum!) (*Gets up, and walks round, &c.*)

COSMO. I've loved Mabel from a boy, sir—my lord.

LORD W. (*Sarcastically*) From the time you were a boy, I presume you mean, (Erhum! Erhum!)

COSMO. (*a little hotly.*) Yes, of course I mean that, and it seems to me incredible that my having come suddenly into 20,000 a year should frustrate my hopes of winning her.

LORD W. It may well do so, but you don't know Mabel; you see, you have been away eight years and you don't know that girl, demme, as she is now. Wilful is only a mild term for her whims and vagaries.

COSMO. She loved me when we parted, or, at least, I had every reason to think so. In fact (*rising, with some temper*) I'm sure she did.

LORD W. (*irritably.*) Well, 'tisn't many men who can speak so 'cock-sure.' Isn't that your nautical term? (Erhum! Erhum!) Why, sir, I tell you she's a very devil of far-fetched ideas and contrarieties, and the older she grows the worse she gets. As to making sure of her favor—ha! ha! ha! I fancy many men have thought that same; but they've found their mistake, sir—they've found their mistake. For my part (*waxing confidential*) I don't mind telling you, Davenant—hum! D'Yncourt—seems odd to call you so—I'm sick of it all; sick of it all. She leads them along, and the blind fools don't see 'tis for her own pleasure for the time, demme, I won't say for her own convenience; but there! women must always have men dangling at their heels, fetching and carrying for 'em. They all come to me (Erhum! Erhum!) with the same tale, and she, demme, she only laughs at them and at me into the bargain. All this I tell you, sir, is nothing new to me. I only wish with all my heart she'd marry you and have done with it.

COSMO. (*a shade bitterly.*) If you had said that eight years ago it would have been more to the point.

LORD W. (*coolly.*) Eight years ago, sir, you were young Cos. Davenant, a poor devil of a navigating lieutenant, with something under £100 a year.

COSMO. (*bitterly.*) I see. (*With some warmth.*) And yet you say now that it is no use my coming to you, although you pronounce her fancy free. I confess I do not understand you. Have you laid my offer fairly before her, and explained matters fully, as stated in my letter?

LORD W. Yes, I tell you, and had the letter torn into bits before my face, and laughed at for my pains.

COSMO. (*gloomily.*) I'm convinced she *did* love me. I thought her answer sure.

LORD W. (*taking snuff.*) Nothing's sure in this world, but death and taxes; least of all, a girl's fancy; there is no for ever in *that*; they said—at least, some fellow says—that “a man's for ever is until his fancy changes, ,” so what can you expect from a woman's? (*closes his silver snuffbox with an impatient click.*) Why, they're all weathercocks for fickleness! they're as unstable, they're as unstable—dem it, they're as unstable as—as—

COSMO. (*anxiously.*) What does she say to my accession of fortune, and consequent change of name?

LORD W. (*testily.*) Nothing, nothing. She has a sovereign contempt of money.

COSMO. (*rising, and flinging away his chair impatiently.*) May I see her? I am altogether at sea; there is some confounded mystery in all this.

LORD W. See her? Of course, by all means, and the sooner the better—now, if you like. There is some chance in taking 'em unawares (Erhum! Erhum!) We are going to the opera to-night, and it's quite time I was getting ready. I'll send word to her that's she's wanted; try your luck in person it ought to tell—try it with all your might; you *may* bring her round, but she swears, egad! she'll never marry a rich man. (Erhum! Erhum!) I'm tired of her vagaries. Of course I'm her father, and fond and proud of her, and I don't like (*with some emotion*) to see her throwing away chance after chance, and remaining single at her age, nearly thirty. By Jove! demme, she ought to think herself *lucky* to get such a chance.

COSMO. For heaven's sake! don't put it that way. If you did, no wonder she took it badly, and tore up my cursed letter.

LORD W. Not I. Not I. All this is only between ourselves. “*Eutrenous, entreneous*,” as all the second-rate novel writers would say, as if the Queen's English wasn't good enough for 'em to express the little they've got to say in, demme, and a shade too good, I take it, Ha! ha! ha! (*Exit, L.*)

Enter MABEL (R,) in evening dress, with opera cloak and gloves in hand, singing “Oh, love for a day, a week, a year, But alas for the love that loves al-way,” goes to the glass and views herself, continues humming the air, turns a waltzing step or two, and sees

COSMO. (*Starts.*)

COSMO. Mabel! (*Somewhat frigidly.*)

MABEL. Cosmo!! Oh dear Cosmo!!! (*Runs to him, takes his outstretched hand, looking eagerly into his face, with her own half raised, expectantly. COSMO remains coolly erect; she recoils shivering, but presently sees he is only putting some severe restraint on himself, when her natural wilfulness and vivacity returns.*) (*Demurely*) You are looking much older, Cosmo.

COSMO. (*awkwardly.*) Yes—I—um—suppose so. I have been roughing it at sea for eight years.

MABEL. (*sighing*) Yes, for eight long years.

COSMO. (*impulsively.*) Oh, my darling, my old love, you are more beautiful than ever. I must—I must kiss you this once? at least I have a *cousin's* right.

MABEL. Oh, Cosmo! (*yielding:*) (*then pettishly retracting.*) I hate cousinly embraces.

COSMO. You are too heartless. (*desisting.*)

MABEL. (*with archness.*) Nay, Cos. I think it is you who are heartless and—and (*aside*) stupid. (*Looks up into his face, and once more his arms close round her, and his lips would have met hers, but she springs aside with a ringing laugh.*) Oh, dear, dear, I thought that was papa coming. Hark! do you not hear him stampeding about over-head? he's been raging all day in *such* gusts, because I vexed him about a letter.

COSMO. Ah, about D'Yncourt's offer.

MABEL. (*blushing.*) So he has already told you of my sins in that quarter. Of course *you* know that I will never marry so—

COSMO. But why will you not say yes, Mabel, darling?

MABEL. (*gasping.*) Cosmo!!! And you—you only come to say *this* to me, after—after all these years! (*stamps her foot with sudden passion.*) But, for all that, know that I will never marry like this. Fancy! a disgusting creature writing such an insulting offer to a woman who does not even know him by sight. I would not marry such a coarse minded brute not even if he were stuffed with tenfold his hateful gold. Now papa just make the best of it, for I will remain single all my—all my wretched miserable life. I wish I had never been born. Cosmo!! You are a wretch.

COSMO. I confess I cannot understand you. I thought you loved me.

MABEL. Are you an idiot? Of course I loved you—once (*laughing rather shrilly.*) I don't deny it; occasionally women are such fools, but now—

COSMO. Then why on earth don't you marry me?

MABEL. (*passionately.*) Because now I *hate* you.

COSMO. That's plain at all events.

MABEL. I always speak plainly. (*fumbling with her gloves.*)

COSMO. (*with some amusement.*) Those gloves seem tiresome to get fastened. Shall I help you?

MABEL. Thanks; such ridiculous nonsense putting such quantities of buttons on gloves. (*looks up questioningly into his face, and smiles; he puts his arm round her to get more conveniently at the glove; she does not struggle, but leans against him.*) What a delightful lady's maid you would make; at once a help and a rest. I! should like a maid like you, Cos. (*with provoking coquetry.*) It would be de-li-cious!

COSMO. (*laughing.*) You would like me much better as a husband. Say yes, Mabel, why are you so contrary?

MABEL. Well, really, Cosmo! and you never asked me before. (Erhum! Erhum!) (*heard outside, both start apart.*)

*Enter* LORD W., L.

LORD W. Well, Cosmo? Have you surrendered: has she come to her senses?

MABEL. As if I had ever been out of them, papa.

LORD W. Well, it's a long lane that has no turning. I'm sure I

hope you will both be happy; and so this is why you have stayed single all this time, miss. (*kissing her.*)

MABEL. Of course it is.

LORD W. All for a rascally young sailor.

MABEL. Hush, papa.

LORD W. (Erhum! Erhum!) Well, he can't think 'tis for his sudden accession of fortune you have married him, anyhow.

MABEL. (*wonderingly.*) Have you had some good fortune, Cos?

COSMO. I begin now to think I have, but I don't understand. I thought you despised my fortune.

MABEL. Oh dear, no.

COSMO. And declined me with scorn, and now you seem—I confess I am in the dark very much still.

MABEL. Are you not poor now, then?

COSMO. No, rather not, but your father said you would not listen to reason—said you would never marry a rich man.

MABEL. "Circumstantium alterum casum."

COSMO. (*laughing in spite of himself.*) And that you tore up my letter, and all that, don't you know.

LORD W. (*aside*) Dem it, why they're all at sea now.

MABEL. What on earth do you mean, Cosmo. Has eight years of sea and some wretched prize money, or something, turned your brain. It was Mr. D'Yncourt's letter I tore up, and I'd tear him up too if I could, because—I loved you.

COSMO. (*mystified, but delighted.*) But I am D'Yncourt.

MABEL. You!! Cosmo Davenant the rich D'Yncourt?

COSMO. Of course. I had to take the name with the money.

MABEL. And I never knew!

COSMO. Why, sir, (*turning angrily to LORD WARTON*) you cannot have explained.

MABEL. (*aside.*) I hate to do a thing I've said I wouldn't do, and I've sworn I'd never marry a rich man. I feel like a rat caught in a trap.

LORD W. (*testily.*) Of course I explained, of course I did; but she was so infernally hasty, she couldn't have listened; she always rushes off at a tangent; she couldn't have listened.

MABEL. Now, papa, you know that if I did not listen enough to understand it is your own fault entirely; you know it is such an old tale; you have always been pestering me to marry some wretched bothering creature for his money, and I never will marry a rich man (*pettishly,*) so there!

COSMO. (*in alarm.*) Surely you will unsay that now, Mabel.

MABEL. No I will not. I am deceived all round; you can go away (*stamping her foot.*)

LORD W. (Erhum! Erhum!) I told you she was full of whims and vagaries.

COSMO. Mabel!! You can never be so cruel—so stubborn.

MABEL. (*haughtily.*) Will you go away, sir?

COSMO. Oh, certainly; I begin to think, with your father, that you do not quite know what you do want. (*turns to leave her.*)

MABEL. (*dolefully, and in tears.*) Yes—I—do—know—what—I—want (*half sobbing.*) I want—a—husband—who'll—who'll—

COSMO. (*rushing back.*) Yes, Mabel.

MABEL. Who'll—

COSMO. Well? Speak, darling.

MABEL. Who'll be kind to me, and—and——

COSMO. For heaven's sake, *what*?

MABEL. Who'll—kiss me, cousin.

LORD W. (*exultant.*) It's all right, you see. (Erhum! Erhum!)

*CURTAIN.*

## THE BLUE STOCKING.

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### CHARACTERS.

GERTRUDE SADHEART.

AMY D'ESPRIT, her friend.

HENRY SPENDLOVE.

SERVANT.

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SCENE—*A Modern Interior, with a Country outlook.*

(GERTRUDE SADHEART discovered alone, seated listlessly, and surrounded by books.)

GERT. (*looking at watch.*) Four o'clock! Six hours more of another weary day before me, with the self-same problem still haunting me: the problem how best to forget my grief. Forget! (*laughing scornfully.*) What mockery to dream of forgetting that which has made itself part of my nature. I pine for my love—false though he has shown himself, and shall pine and pine until *he* returns, or *I* die!

(*A knock at the door.*)

GERT. Come in!

(*Enter AMY D'ESPRIT.*)

AMY. They told me I should find you up here. I've just run up to see if I could cheer you a little bit, Gerty.

GERT. You're really kind.

AMY. You're such a sad girl. I can't make you out. You're clever and good-looking and well off, and yet you're always *so* sad and *so* quiet. (*mimicking GERTRUDE'S languor.*)

GERT. My dear Amy, you would be sad and quiet too, if you labored under a grief such as mine.

AMY. I have often wondered, Gerty, what this all-absorbing grief of yours is.

GERT. Have they never told you, then?

AMY. Never.

GERT. The world is not generally so remiss in retailing peoples' troubles.

AMY. Nor are girls, as a rule, as abstaining as I have been in asking about peoples' troubles.

GERT. Ah, you sly girl; if the truth were told, you are burning to know my melancholy little story.

AMY. My curiosity is certainly not *lessened* by my abstinence.

GERT. I know you are the kindest of girls, and that I am sure of your sympathy.

AMY. You have never given me the chance of showing whether I'm kind or not, but if you'll confide in me I can promise you my sympathy.

GERT. Well, then, make yourself comfortable. (*Pointing to chair.*)

AMY. (*laughingly.*) And prepare my pocket-handkerchief?

GERT. (*sadly.*) There is time enough for that, Amy, when your own turn comes.

AMY. (*mock-startled.*) But I hope it never may.

GERT. And I pray it never will!

AMY. Before you begin, let me make a guess.

GERT. Why not?

AMY. Is *love* an element of your grief?

GERT. What a question, child! What sentiment in woman is not founded on love? And mine was *indeed* love: pure, earnest, absorbing; a first, and an only love!

AMY. And *who* was the happy man?

GERT. You never knew him. Poor Harry! Would that you had, and you could better appreciate my disappointment.

AMY. But how can you look for my appreciation when you have not told me anything yet?

GERT. It is a short story, as most sad stories are. Harry and I were brought up together as children; we loved one another as children; we loved one another as youth and maiden. At least, I *thought* so, and—I still hope so. But after years of mutual protestation Harry one day suddenly left our neighborhood. No one knew the why nor the wherefore. Some said to seek a fortune in business; others, that he had an intrigue in the village, from which he wished to escape. But that is calumny—base calumny. Be it what it may, no one has ever heard from him since; it is now five years since he left me. I fear he is dead; he could not be alive and keep such cruel silence. If he is dead (I shudder to speak the word!) my love will outlive him. *That* will die only with myself!

AMY. If you believe this person to be dead you should try to forget him.

GERT. That is impossible.

AMY. You should throw off thoughts of the past, and, as you are still young, make for yourself a new and a brighter future!

GERT. Impossible! It is the utmost I can do to make time pass tolerably. My only solace I find in study. My books are my only resource. Whilst I read, I forget. When I cease, all my sad memories rush back to me with double force. I am a listless reader, for beyond seeking a change, I read with no purpose. But I am an earnest reader, nevertheless.

AMY. *Too* earnest, by far! Too much reading is as bad as an overdose of medicine. Living in books is all very well, but you live in the world, the bright and lively world, and must be up and doing, and *see* the world, not simply read of it. Why, Gerty, what do you think the people out of doors call you.

GERT. Something unkind, I have no doubt.

AMY. Well, it isn't exactly nice, but it isn't so very unkind, either. They call you "the Blue Stocking."

GERT. I don't think the cap fits.

AMY. You should rather say *the stocking!*

GERT. Typical blue-stockings are old maids who are too ugly to be loved, and, therefore, make husbands of their books.

AMY. Not always. Sometimes they make husbands of the crotchety old professors round whom they gather.

GERT. Then there used to be another sort of blue-stockings: the blue-stockings of Pope's time. They were the first of the species. They were often handsome, and often *had* husbands—and lovers too.

AMY. Then you've been reading up the subject, Miss Gerty?

GERT. By one of those curious coincidences I just came across a paper on the subject, in a recent book of miscellanies.

AMY. Speaking of recent books, have you read the latest novel?

GERT. What is it called?

AMY. "Love in Exile."

GERT. What a strange title! It quite takes my fancy.

AMY. And I am sure the *story* will. Shall I give you a sketch of the plot?

GERT. No, I think not, or you will destroy the interest.

AMY. Well, do you know it has a wonderful similarity to your own tale, only it recounts both sides of the story.

GERT. How do you mean?

AMY. It tells what the young man was *doing*, while the girl was simply *pinning*.

GERT. Oh, how I shall devour it! I am quite in a hurry to begin.

AMY. (*rising*.) Then you won't mind my saying good-bye?

GERT. But you haven't given me the book.

AMY. (*laughing, and taking book out of satchel, and handing it to GERTRUDE*.) I am a regular woman. I come with a purpose, and go away without accomplishing it.

GERT. (*who had risen, and who had just commenced carelessly turning over the pages of the book, now falls back with a scream*.) Oh, heaven! this is too much.

AMY. (*running to GERTRUDE, and in alarm*.) What can be the matter, dear?

GERT. You have indeed accomplished more than you came to do.

AMY. What do you mean, Gerty? Relieve my distress!

GERT. Read the title-page of that book.

AMY. (*takes up book wonderingly, and finding the title-page, reads, staccato, and in an inquiring voice*.) "'Love in Exile,' a Novel, in One Volume, by Henry Spendlove, 1881."

GERT. That is it! Henry Spendlove is my dear, dear lover; and he lives, as the date shows. Thank God, he lives!

AMY. What a strange discovery! How happy I am that I came here to-day!

GERT. How can I thank you, Amy?

AMY. By *ceasing* to thank me.

(*Enter SERVANT*.)

SERVANT. A gentleman wishes to see Miss Sadheart, but refuses to give his name.

GERT. It is Harry, I know, I am sure.

(HARRY SPENDLOVE *rushes in from behind* Servant, *runs towards* GERTRUDE, *and clasps her in his arms.*)

HARRY. It is indeed he, my dear Gerty. It is Harry come back to ask forgiveness, and—your hand: to ask the treasure he could not claim five years ago, because he could have brought its fair possessor only that love in a cottage which too often ends in love in a poor-house.

GERT. But why did you leave us, Harry, without a word, and keep us all this time without a line?

HARRY. I went away to try and make myself a position. I was goaded into such suddenness of action by the taunts of a rival, who, I thank heaven, has not displaced me. I determined that if I failed you should never hear from me again. As I am here you know I have succeeded.

GERT. And what have you been doing all this time, Harry.

HARRY. I went to a large city, and became a newspaper drudge. The happy thought one day occurred to me to try and compensate myself, in a small degree, for the sadness our long separation gave me by writing the story of our divided loves, hiding our identities under fictional names. The publication of this novel by an hitherto unknown author created a *furor* among the critics by reason of what they were good enough to call its truthful intensity and pathos. They did not know that its pathos was wrung from my heart; that I was describing a faithfulness such as I knew was yours—a faithfulness as you know has ever been mine. I could not *help* the truthfulness of my story. I drew from life; I told the world what my heart told me.

AMY. (*humorously.*) Yours was a *practical* devotion, sir?

HARRY. (*looking to GERTRUDE with some confusion.*) I—that is—I really didn't—

GERT. (*coming to the rescue.*) This is my kind friend, Amy d'Esprit (*they bow*) who has so often brought me her kind presence in the hour of my grief. She has a right to be here in the hour of my joy.

HARRY. (*observing book.*) Hallo, why here's my book!

GERT. Yes, that is another instance of Amy's kindness. And the accident of my finding your name on the title-page prepared me for the delightful shock of your return.

HARRY. You will read my book, Gerty, of course?

GERT.—I will read your book, Harry. I will read all your books. And among your books you shall be as my bible. I shall henceforth restrict myself to reading your heart, and to studying your comfort, for from this day I shall cease to be

“A BLUE STOCKING.”

CURTAIN.

# MY MYSTERIOUS RIVAL.

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## CHARACTERS.

HARRY HASTY.	LUCY BROWN.
PEREGRINE PLUME.	MARY MARVEL.

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SCENE.—*A neatly-furnished Apartment. Door in FLAT C. Side Doors. R. 2 E., and L. 2 E.*

MARY MARVEL is discovered arranging the room. HARRY HASTY enters C. D. F.

HASTY. Ah, Mary. Can I see your mistress?

MARY (*pertly*). Sometimes, sir.

HASTY. What means this evasive answer? I ask you whether she will receive now.

MARY (*as before*). You, sir.

HASTY. Why! Of course! me! If she cannot receive me, I suppose that she would not think of receiving anyone else.

MARY (*as before*). Perhaps not—except—

HASTY. Except whom? I should like to know.

MARY (*affecting indifference*). Except her maid.

HASTY. Well, then, make use of that privilege to see whether it will be extended to me.

MARY. Just now, sir?

HASTY. Immediately.

MARY. And what shall I say to my young lady, sir?

HASTY. Say! that I want to see her of course. (*Aside*). What the deuce can the girl be giggling about?

MARY. Well, sir, I'll try.

HASTY. Stop! I hear her surely.

*Enter LUCY BROWN, L. D.*

MARY. (*to whom LUCY makes a gesture to go.*) Very well, ma'am. (*Aside, going*). Poor fellow! How he is led about by the nose to be sure.

HASTY. Come, Lucy, come. Give me your hand (*takes it*). I could not be happy until I saw you. You don't speak! not a word! Ah, Lucy!

LUCY (*tenderly*). Do you give me time? You speak—I listen: and you express all that I feel.

HASTY. Your words reassure me, Lucy.

LUCY. Reassure you! Were you uneasy then?

HASTY. No—that is to say—yes. But it is past and gone.

LUCY. What could cause your uneasiness?

HASTY. Nothing—nothing assuredly—only—sometimes when I come, you don't choose to receive me—you are shut up—and, in fact, I might almost fancy you want to get rid of me.

LUCY. (*aside.*) Can he suspect? (*Aloud, endeavoring to conceal some agitation.*) You know that I live alone—that I am without family—without friends except yourself. Whom should I receive. My birth—my education—my position—all keep me from society. (*Sighs.*)

HASTY. Don't say so, Lucy. Although of humble birth, early left an orphan, and placed in another position of fortune only by the last will of a godfather whom you never saw, you have always been irreproachable in your conduct; you support the necessities of your isolated position with a delicacy that disarms all censure, and you have displayed a tact in adapting yourself to the manners of the polite world that does you honor. There is no drawing-room but would be proud of you, Lucy.

LUCY. No, no. You must not flatter me, Harry. I have done, however, what I could to make myself worthy of *you*, who have deigned to love, and asked me to be your wife.

HASTY. You are worthy of a prince's love.

LUCY (*smiling but embarrassed*). You are kind. But—but—

HASTY (*growing uneasy*). But what? but what? Speak, Lucy. I have all confidence in you. Yet these "buts" distract me. (*Aside.* There is something. This constant constraint and mystery (*walking about*). You do not speak! What's the meaning of this "but" "but?"

LUCY. Calm yourself, I entreat you. I would only say—but I cannot forget that I have worked for my bread.

HASTY (*relieved*). Is that all? Is that really all? (*takes her hand*). Fie! fie, Lucy! Away with such thoughts! Do not *I* work for my livelihood as an author? Need you blush for what was only honorable?

LUCY. How it relieves my mind to hear you speak thus! I feared lest you should entertain a feeling of shame—

HASTY (*interrupting her*). Never, never. Whatever your birth I love you: is not that sufficient? And you—tell me that you love me, too, a little.

LUCY. Yes, Harry, yes. (*A clock strikes. She starts uneasily*). Ah!

HASTY. Why do you hesitate?

LUCY. It has struck twelve.

HASTY. What matter? Why check my happiness?

LUCY. (*embarrassed*). I have promised to meet my lawyer.

HASTY. I thought you said all your law business, relative to your godfather's property, was terminated.

LUCY. (*as above*). Not quite. I have a few papers still to sign.

HASTY (*suspiciously*). You will allow me then to accompany you to your lawyer's?

LUCY. Impossible! It would not be proper that we should be seen to leave the house together. Perhaps you would have the kindness—

HASTY. Ah! You dismiss me. (*Deprecating gesture of Lucy*). Well! I go. But when can I come back?

LUCY. At three. I shall be home by that hour. Good-bye, Harry. At three, remember. I shall expect you.

HASTY. I shall not fail (*aside*) in my determination to follow her, and see where she goes.

LUCY. Till then, good-bye, Harry.

HASTY. Good-bye. Good-bye. (*Goes to the door, returns, looks round suspiciously*). Good-bye! (*Exit L. D.*)

LUCY (*alone*). I trust he will never discover. (*A tap at the door R.*) Ah! it was high time that he should go. (*She opens the door R. with caution*). Come in! Quick! quick!

*Enter PEREGRINE R. D.*

PERE. Behold me exact to the hour of rendezvous

LUCY. But one moment sooner, and we had been surprised.

PERE. You don't say so!

LUCY. (*Going to the entrance door at back, looking out, and returning*). You know what importance I attach to this concealment.

PERE. Yes! and I take every precaution to remain undiscovered. I slip in at the back garden gate like a sylph. I scour the grass-plot as Camilla scoured the plain, and I whisk into the back door like a pantomime sprite into a vampire. (*Imitating*). Bang! hist! gone!

LUCY. And you are sure no one has ever seen you? Not even my maid?

PERE. Once I fancied I saw that specimen of curiosity looking out of an upper window at a fellow in the lane as I flitted through the garden. But I skipped across with more than my usual elasticity of step.

LUCY. And you think that Mary never saw you?

PERE. As her eye was evidently on the fellow, I could not suppose she did; unless indeed she looks two ways at once—a complication of the visual organs—to speak delicately—with which I am not aware she is endowed.

LUCY. But come! Our time is so short; and here we are not sure against surprise.

PERE. Light as the air I follow you.

LUCY. Come. This way! (*Going L. D.*) In this room we need not fear discovery.

PERE. We may defy the very—presiding chairman of the infernal regions himself—to speak delicately. (*Exeunt L. D.*)

MARY MARVEL *peeps in C. D. F.*

MARY (*alone*). Ah! ha! You need not fear discovery, need you not? That's to be seen! (*Advancing*.) It is the very spark I saw giving a hop, skip, and jump across the back garden the other day. I knew he must be a lover, although I took him at first for a house-breaker! What a fool you were, Mary Marvel! But I am only at my A B C in love matters. And now I am not sorry to take a lesson of my more accomplished mistress, who evidently has two strings to her bow, or rather two beaux to her string. The intended is sent out of the way, the more favored rival is received in secret. Well, so far all is easy enough. I could have done as much myself, without a lesson. But who can this gentleman be? When I listened at the keyhole—for I *did* listen at the keyhole, all for the sake of instructing myself as a decent lady's maid ought to do—I heard my mistress call him Peregrine. I'm sorry for Mr. Hasty, for he's a nice man; but then these men were born to be dupes; and I suppose it's his fate to be one also.

*Enter HARRY HASTY hurriedly C. D. F.*

HASTY (*aside*). She certainly never left the house. I should have seen her do so. (*Aloud*.) Mary!

MARY. Sir!

HASTY (*scrutinizing*). Your mistress not come back yet?

MARY. No, sir. (*Aside*). That's no lie, since she hasn't gone out.

HASTY. She is at home! confess. (*Pointing R.*) Don't I hear someone in that room?

MARY. That's no room. It's a staircase.

HASTY. A staircase! (*opening door R.*) True! It's very odd! I never knew of this staircase before. Where does it lead?

MARY. Into the garden.

HASTY. And there is a back door?

MARY. Into the lane close by.

HASTY. Ah! fool that I was! She went that way, and I thus have missed her. (*Sits himself*). I shall wait.

MARY. I have no orders to the contrary, sir. (*A slight noise, L.*)

HASTY. I am sure I heard a noise in that room. (*Goes L.*)

MARY (*aside*). Now I shall see how she gets out of this scrape. It will be an excellent lesson!

HASTY. There is no key in the door. It is closed.

MARY. Probably in order that no one should open it.

HASTY (*violently*). What does this mean? She says she is going out, and then stops at home and shuts herself up. I will know the reason of this mystery.

MARY. Are you aware, sir, of the dangers of "fatal curiosity?"

HASTY. Stand aside. You are in the plot, no doubt!

*Enter LUCY, L. D. She closes the door rapidly and places herself before it.*

LUCY. This noise! Harry!

HASTY. I was right. She was there!

MARY (*aside*). Now let's hear what she has to say for herself.

LUCY. What is the matter, Harry? I surely told you I should not be back before three.

HASTY. And it seems to *me*, that you are back long before that hour.

LUCY. But—I have not been out yet.

HASTY. You need not tell me so. I can see it perfectly well. You were in that room—hum! alone, of course?

LUCY (*confused*). Why that question?

MARY (*aside*). A perfect assumption of innocence! That's it! She's a clever young woman I must say.

LUCY. Hear me, Harry. Before going out to my lawyer's—

HASTY. Well—before going out to your lawyer's—

LUCY. I was only—writing.

HASTY. Indeed!

MARY (*aside*). Admirable! Only writing! She is an expert young woman.

LUCY (*to MARY*). What are you doing there?

MARY. Listening to you, ma'am (*with admiration*). Ah!

LUCY. Go.

MARY (*aside, going*). Get rid of your maid, and cajole your intended—that's the next manœuvre! I must repeat it—she is an expert young woman. (*Exit L. D.*)

HASTY (*walking up and down*). So! you were employed in writing; and now, of course, you are going to your lawyer's.

LUCY. No; it's too late now. I shall go to-morrow. I shall not go out to-day.

HASTY. Well, then, I'll remain. (*A pause*). But I'm in your way, perhaps?

LUCY. Have I ever given you reason to believe that your presence was not agreeable to me?

HASTY (*bitterly*). Oh! of course—never—never.

LUCY. Then why those angry looks—your tone of vexation? You evidently harbor some unkind thought towards me. Explain.

HASTY. Since you demand an explanation you shall have one. Your business at your lawyer's was only a pretext.

LUCY. Ah, Harry!

HASTY. You always get rid of me at certain hours upon some pretext or other.

LUCY (*confused, looking L. with fear*). But what purpose should I have?

HASTY. Can I account for your strange conduct. You persist in putting off our marriage from month to month.

LUCY. Harry! I have done all I could to remove the obstacles, which still exist, to our union.

HASTY. What obstacles? You are alone in the world—free to marry whom or where you please. If obstacles there be, they must be of your own creation. What are they? Speak!

LUCY. You shall know by-and-by; but not now—not now.

HASTY. You bid me trust in *you*, while you repose no trust in *me*. Lucy! Lucy! I can bear this no longer. You do *not* love me.

LUCY. Harry! You are cruel and unkind.

HASTY. Oh, yes! (*ironically*) and you the most injured of women! But how can I do otherwise than doubt, when you refuse to bind yourself more nearly to me by a step as innocent as simple?

LUCY. What do you mean?

HASTY. Though I have written to you a hundred times, you have never chosen to give me the happiness of one line from your hand in answer. But a coquette knows better than to write. A letter is a standing witness—a witness of treachery and deceit sometimes.

LUCY. Harry, Harry! You shock me by this outburst.

HASTY (*continuing*). But I know you now. I know with whom I have to deal. And you have seen me for the last time. (*Going to the door.*) For the last time. (*Exit violently, C. D. F.*)

LUCY. Harry! Harry! He is gone! Never, never to return, he said. Oh! that cannot, must not be. A letter! a letter, it seems, would pacify him. Since there is no other means, so be it, then. For he must not abandon me. No, no, he must and shall return. (*Exit, unlocking the door L., and then closing it cautiously behind her.*)

HASTY (*re-appearing C. D. F.*) For the last time, I say! and do not suppose that I ever mean to come back again. She's not there! She's gone! Very calm and happy doubtless, caring little for my misery! And shall I still love her? No, no. I detest—I despise her. (*Sits down.*) I'll not remain another instant in her house. I'll go. I'll go anywhere, so as never to see her again.

*Enter MARY, C. D. F.*

HASTY. Ah! You are there, are you? Come here, Miss Mary, and

speak the truth if you can. (*Springs up.*) Are you aware that your mistress is making game of me?

MARY. You don't say so!

HASTY. That she treats me as her dupe?

MARY. Well! I *never*.

HASTY. That she plays me false?

MARY. Lor! Who would have thought of it?

HASTY. But what do *you* think? Speak!

MARY. Think, sir? I think that if my mistress deceived you, she would'n't tell you. Has she told you she did?

HASTY. Wretched young woman, you are laughing at me, too.

MARY. I laugh, sir! I! incapable, sir! I never laugh!—or if I laugh, it is because you fancy I laugh. Such a droll idea!

HASTY (*apart*). I am deceived, cheated, despised, and this malicious little minx knows it. But I will be revenged. Ah! that back staircase, of which I did not know the existence! If there is anyone in the house, he shall not leave it without my knowledge. I'll answer for it. (*Exit hastily by door R.*)

MARY (*laughing*). Hallo! where are you going, sir? That's not the way out. My mistress allows no one to go that way. (*Calling after him.*) Come back, sir; come back.

HASTY (*re-entering*). Well, you needn't scream so. (*Aside*). No one now can leave the house otherwise than by the front door (*shows a key, which he puts in his pocket*), and there I'll post myself on the watch, even if I do sentry-duty to eternity. (*Aloud*). Good-bye, Mary. (*Exit C. D. F.*)

MARY (*alone*). It is very evident he begins to suspect. I suppose he must have heard my mistress and this Mr. Peregrine. What can they be talking about? I might get another lesson if I were to listen. Here goes! (*Listening, L.*) What's that my mistress says? 'My dear good friend.' Her dear good friend: I thought as much. (*Listening*). 'I love you—you alone.' Well, if that isn't clear, I don't know what is. I wouldn't be a man to be made a fool of—a man! no, not for all that I could see. The women have always the best of it: and a wonderful woman my young mistress is—that I must say.

*Enter LUCY, L. D., with a letter.*

LUCY. Ah! you are there, Mary. Take this letter to Mr. Hasty as quickly as you can.

MARY (*going, aside*). When the intended grows suspicious, the plan is to send him a *billet-doux*, and lure him back. Oh! she is an expert young woman. *Exit C. D. F.*

LUCY (*opening the door, L.*) Come out now; my maid is gone, and the coast is clear.

*Enter PEREGRINE, L. D.*

PERE. I'm glad of it; for it's so warm in that room. I'm all in a sudorific vapor—to speak delicately. (*Fans himself with his hat.*)

LUCY. Quick! by the back staircase. Good-bye!

PERE. To-morrow you will expect me again?

LUCY. Yes, yes.

PERE. At the same hour?

LUCY. At the same hour.

PERE. Good-bye! (*Aside*). I'm not sorry to be out of this—or rather to mizzle unseen. (*Exit R. D.*)

*Enter HASTY C. D. F.*

LUCY (*aside*). Oh! There was not a moment to be lost.

HASTY. Lucy, you have made me the happiest of beings.

LUCY (*smiling*). So! there you are, naughty man. (*Mimicking*). "You have seen me for the last time, madam. I will never enter this house again!" Fie! fie!

HASTY. Forgive me, Lucy.

LUCY. Spoiled child that you are! pouting for a nothing—appeased by a mere trifle.

HASTY. Oh! do not call this dear, precious letter, (*shows it*) with which you lured back your truant, a trifle. Your maid had not far to go with it. She found me close by your door—

LUCY (*uneasily*). Watching as a spy—oh! Harry!

HASTY. Walking up and down before it, like a madman, elbowing all the old women in my rage, kicking all the little dogs in my way, knocking aside all the umbrellas, and tripping myself up over a perambulator. I could not tear myself from the spot.

LUCY (*aside*). Poor Harry!

HASTY. What was my joy, then, my delirious joy, when Mary put into my hand that letter. I could have kissed her in the street, spite of the drivers of cabs and omnibuses who drew up to stare at me. I could have embraced all the world—drivers, horses, and all the passengers inside and out, in my excess of joy.

LUCY. Harry.

HASTY. Oh! you were wrong not to grant me sooner this precious boon, which I thus place upon my heart, in order that it may be close to its address.

LUCY (*embarrassed*). No more, Harry.

HASTY. Yes! let me kiss a thousand times the charming characters traced here—

*He is about to kiss the letter. LUCY stops him.*

LUCY. No; no. I beg of you.

HASTY. Why restrain me? Yes, true! rather let me kiss the hand that traced the lines. (*Kisses her hand.*)

LUCY (*aside*). He really pains me with a feeling of remorse.

HASTY. And could I suspect you—could I accuse you, Lucy? For in my blind jealousy I *did* accuse you. Oh! I was a fool—an insensate fool.

LUCY. You were unjust, no more.

HASTY. In my folly I even went so far as to imagine you received some mysterious rival in my absence.

LUCY. But that is past now. (*Aside.*) How fortunate that he was able to get away.

HASTY. Yes, and I abjure all my suspicions forever—forever. I swear it to you. (*Takes her hand.*)

*PEREGRINE here opens the door R. and looks in.*

PERE. Some one with her! The devil! (*Closes the door hastily and disappears.*)

HASTY (*who has seen him*). Ah!

LUCY. What?

HASTY. Eh?

LUCY. You said "Ah!"

HASTY. Did I?

LUCY. And you now look so strange again.

HASTY. Fancy.

LUCY. No. What is the matter?

HASTY. Nothing—nothing whatever. (*Aside.*) He is still there.

LUCY. All your doubts are gone, then?

HASTY. Ah, oh! Quite, I assure you.

*Enter MARY MARVEL, C. D. F.*

MARY. Your dressmaker is there, ma'am.

LUCY. Ah! that is an important affair. You will not be vexed that I should quit you for a few minutes, Harry.

HASTY. No, no. Go by all means. (*Aside.*) Lucky chance.

LUCY (*waving her hand to HASTY*). The important business shall be dispatched as quickly as possible.

HASTY. Oh! don't hurry yourself. (*Aside.*) Cockatrice!

LUCY. Come, Mary! (*Exit with MARY, C. D. F.*)

HASTY (*alone*). At last! Now I hold my mysterious rival within my grasp! He shall not escape me! But I will be calm; and my vengeance shall be all the deeper. (*Opening the door R.*) Come forth, sir—come forth I say.

*Enter PEREGRINE.*

PERE. The very thing of all others I most wished to do, sir. I am much obliged to you, sir, and have the honor of wishing you a very good morning. (*He endeavors to go off by back.*)

HASTY (*pulling him back*). I beg your pardon. There is time for that.

PERE. You may have time, I dare say, sir; but I happen to be remarkably and urgently pressed. (*Going.*)

HASTY (*pulling him back*). A moment, if you please. You must have been rather astonished to find the door leading into the garden locked.

PERE. Both surprised and annoyed, sir; for as I happen to be remarkably and urgently pressed—(*going*).

HASTY (*pulling him back*). You shall not go until I have had a few minutes' conversation with you. You are acquainted with the lady of this house?

PERE. I have that honor.

HASTY. And you admire her?

PERE. And you, sir?

HASTY. That's not the point, sir. Answer me, I beg.

PERE. I have the usual visionary organs, sir—to speak delicately; and I am accustomed to use them for the purpose to which they are destined by nature (*walking off hurriedly*).

HASTY (*running after him and pulling him back*). Stop, sir.

PERE. You'll exasperate me at last, sir. By what right do you arrest a free-born citizen? Are you a bailiff, sir? or a detective, police, special, or otherwise, sir? I demand my *habeas corpus*.

HASTY. As soon as you have answered a few questions, you shall be at liberty.

PERE. Questions! Are you a magistrate—and is this the bench? But never mind—speak, sir. I listen.

HASTY. Do you know how to write, sir?

PERE. I! write! The probabilities are most decidedly in favor of my being a proficient in caligraphic art.

HASTY. Then, sir, you will have the kindness to sit down here and write at my dictation.

PERE. I am not in the habit, sir—without certain preliminary arrangements—and, I have the honor of wishing you a very good morning. (*Attempts to go.*)

HASTY (*pulling him back*). Ah! you refuse? Then I must have recourse to other means. (*Seizes his hand.*)

PERE. I say! enough of that—you grip like a vise—you paralyze my digital organs—to speak delicately; and how am I to hold a pen after that? (*Shakes his hand with pain.*)

HASTY. You consent then?

PERE (*aside*). If it's the only way to get quit of this maniac. (*Aloud.*) I consent, sir.

HASTY. At last! Are you ready, sir?

PERE. (*seating himself at the table*). Quite, sir.

HASTY (*taking up a pen*). Here's a pen. (*Tries to put it into the hand of PEREGRINE.*)

PERE. (*screaming*). \*Hands off! no more of that! I've still got the cramp in my fingers.

HASTY. Quick, sir; write!

PERE. (*taking the pen*). My autograph, perhaps—come that's flattering.

HASTY. No, sir—as follows—(*dictating*) 'Madam.'

PERE. (*writing*). 'Madam.' It's a lady we have the honor of addressing?

HASTY. No questions.

PERE. (*aside*). He wants to have them all to himself.

HASTY (*dictating*). 'I have never really loved you.'

PERE. Ho! Ho! it's a rupture.

HASTY. I intend it should be, sir. Have you written——?

PERE. (*writing*)—'never really loved you.'

HASTY (*dictating*). 'It is your fortune alone that is the attraction—'

PERE. Allow me, sir; such things *do* happen; but ordinarily they are not avowed.

HASTY. A truce to your observations, sir—write what I said!

PERE. (*writing*)—'fortune alone that was the attraction.' (*Aside.*) Well! it is the oddest thing for a man to write to a lady!

HASTY (*dictating*). 'For me you have jilted and deceived a man who loved you to distraction——'

PERE. No, you don't say so? You think she jilted——

HASTY. Will you write, sir? (*Goes to grasp his hand.*)

PERE. Anything you please, sir; but hands off! (*Writing*)—'loved you to distraction.'

HASTY (*dictating*). "But now I despise you, as he must and does despise you——"

PERE. Now really, sir, to a lady, there is in these words a crudity of expression—to speak delicately; but if you think it becoming—(*writing*)—'must and does despise you.'

HASTY. Is it written?

PERE. It is, sir, and in a specimen of penmanship at once masterly and delicate, I flatter myself.

HASTY (*looking over him*). What do I see there? No! Can it be possible? (*Snatches the paper.*)

PERE. (*rising*). Is there anything you find objectionable, sir? I believe the 'i's' are all dotted, and the 't's' all crossed, with the most rigorous exactitude.

HASTY (*walking up and down with agitation*). I can scarcely believe my eyes. It was he! he! And she dared to make game of me in this treacherous fashion. Oh! both shall smart for this cruel derision! (*Placing himself before PEREGRINE with rage*). So you love me, then?

PERE. Love you. I don't see that you have given me the slightest reason—

HASTY. You love me—me alone!

PERE (*aside*). If any body would but tell me where his keeper is.

HASTY. Do you mean to deny your own writing, sir?

PERE. Never, sir, never. That is a point of honor.

HASTY (*showing the letter he has received*). You traced these lines, sir! It's no use denying. She used you as her amanuensis, sir.

PERE. Certainly, sir; just as you have done me the honor to do yourself.

HASTY. And I covered the letter with kisses. It is infamous!

PERE. Infamous! now come. Permit me to remark that the 'i's' and the 't's'—

HASTY. No more foolery, sir. I will endure this insulting irony no longer. You come here every day—

PERE. Except Sundays.

HASTY. By that back staircase (*pointing R.*)

PERE. To arrive at a first-floor a staircase is generally considered a necessary convenience, sir.

HASTY (*furious*). But not to leave it, sir; for you shall go out of the window.

PERE (*getting away*). Thank you; I had rather not—

HASTY (*advancing*). I shall not consult your inclination, sir; for out of it you shall go.

PERE (*getting round the stage*). Stand off, monster! Are you going to destroy me?

HASTY (*pursuing him*). Have you not destroyed the happiness of my life? And shall I leave you unpunished? (*Hunting him into a corner and seizing him by the collar*). No!

PERE (*screaming*). Help! help! police! murder! a strait jacket! two straitjackets! a whole bedlam-store of strait jackets! Help! help!

*Enter LUCY hastily, C. D. F., followed by MARY.*

LUCY. What is the meaning of these cries? (*Seeing PEREGRINE confused*.) Ah! he there?

HASTY. Come, madam, come! Your presence alone was necessary to complete the scene.

MARY (*aside*). The two lovers at loggerheads! What will she do now?

PERE. My dear madam, is the gentleman often thus? You had better speak to his friends.

LUCY. Harry! Harry! Such conduct is unworthy of you! It is that of a madman.

HASTY. A madman! Yes, I was mad to love you—mad to believe your word—mad to trust to your pretended love.

LUCY. Harry! I entreat you—

HASTY. And then you must add sarcasm and irony to your perfidy,

by causing this man to trace those lines, in which I thought to find a guarantee of your affection.

MARY. (*aside.*) Well! that *was* clever! She is a wonderful young woman.

LUCY. (*with an effort.*) Harry! I beseech you to calm yourself. You force me now to blush before you!

HASTY. (You *should* blush—if you could. Can you deny that you sent me this letter?

LUCY. No.

HASTY. Dare you affirm that you yourself have written it?

LUCY. (*with shame.*) No.

HASTY. Can you pretend that it was not written by that man?

LUCY. (*in the greatest agitation.*) But, Harry! Harry! if I don't know how to write myself—

HASTY. What do I hear?

LUCY. Cruel man. This is the secret I desired to conceal from you. Ashamed of my ignorance, I put off the moment of our union until I should be more worthy of you. I struggled to remedy the deficiencies of my education in early life for your sake; and then you accuse—insult me. (*Weeps.*)

HASTY. Lucy! Is it possible? And this man—

PERE. (*presenting his card.*) My name, sir, is Peregrine Plume, Professor of the Caligraphic Science—to speak delicately, and inventor by patent of the art of teaching penmanship in its highest branches in twenty-four hours—one hour twice a week. (*Aside.*) That makes just three months.

MARY. (*aside.*) It's all a sham, I'm convinced. But she has got out of it. She is a wonderful young woman!

HASTY. Pardon a guilty and repentant wretch, Lucy. Oh, pardon me. Let my jealousy be considered as a proof of my o'erwhelming love. (Lucy *smiles and gives her hand.*) And now I in future will be your only master.

PERE. Sir, you rob me of my pupil!

LUCY. I think I shall learn more quickly with him.

PERE. More quickly than four-and-twenty hours?

LUCY. Which have now lasted more than two months.

PERE. But you already make the most beautiful "O's." Oh! my pupil! Oh! what "O's" you make. True circles of beauty—to speak delicately.

HASTY. What pleasure I shall have in being your professor! Success, I trust, will crown our mutual efforts; and may good fortune attend us!

MARY. And me, too, I hope, sir.

HASTY. You, too, and also in his future career (*pointing to PEREGRINE*) "My Mysterious Rival!"

CURTAIN.

# DON'T BE TOO QUICK TO CRY WOLF.

## CHARACTERS.

GUY GILBERT,  
GERALDINE GILBERT, } a newly-married couple,  
CAPTAIN GEORGE.

SCENE.—*Morning Room in GUY GILBERT'S Country House. Mid-day.*  
GUY and GERALDINE discovered. *He is seated absorbed in a book.*  
*She is engaged arranging flowers at a table.*

GERALDINE (*after once or twice endeavoring fruitlessly by signs to attract his attention.*) Guy!

GUY (*makes a sign as though he had heard her, but does not speak.*)

GER. Guy!

GUY. (*Business as before.*)

GER. Guy!

GUY (*without taking his eyes off the book.*) Well, dear?

GER. I do wish you would attend to what I have to say.

GUY (*looking up.*) Well, I am attending.

GER. What a beautiful morning it is.

GUY. Now, my dear child, you have called me three times, and distracted my attention from a most interesting part of the book which I am trying to read, to say it's a beautiful morning. Why, we agreed upon that subject two hours ago.

GER. I don't think it matters to you whether the morning is beautiful or not; you don't appreciate it.

GUY. Dearest wife, I *do* appreciate it; I *am* appreciating it. It is a delicious morning. (*Continues to read.*)

GER. Ah, no! You do not appreciate it: you cannot appreciate it, or you would not be sitting there reading. (*Pauses. GUY continues to read.*)

GER (*impatiently*) Guy!

GUY (*collecting himself.*) I beg your pardon.

GER. Why don't you talk?

GUY. Talk, eh? Oh, yes, to be sure. What a beautiful morning.

GER. Don't mock me in that way, Guy; please don't. You may think it funny, but it wounds me. Oh, you can't think how it wounds me.

GUY. Mock you, my darling—wound you? What *do* you mean? What have I said?

GER. Why you just said it was a beautiful morning.

GUY. Well, it is; is it not?

GER. I had just said that.

GUY. Upon my life I didn't hear you. (*Resumes his book. She goes on petulantly arranging flowers.*)

GER. (*after a pause.*) Do you know what I am doing?

GUY. (*without looking up.*) Eh?

GER. Will you kindly look at what I am doing?

GUY. (*looking at her.*) Oh, yes; I see. Making a nosegay. Very pretty: very charming.

GER. I was not making a nosegay just then; I was doing this. (*Pulls a piece of grass to pieces.*)

GUY. What on earth are you doing that for? Rather wasteful, isn't it? and rather calculated to make a mess in the room, and, as you are very fond of putting it, "to make work for the servants?"

GER. (*petulantly.*) You never understand me. I was doing what I often used to do when I was a foolish young girl—

GUY (*interrupting.*) And before you had servants?

GER. Yes, before I was married, which means the same thing. (*Goes on pulling grass.*) "He loves me," "He loves me not," "He loves me"—

GUY. Oh, I know now. Well, of course it comes right each time.

GER. Indeed, it doesn't. I've tried five times, and it's always wrong. Every thing is wrong now.

GUY. What rubbish.

GER (*throwing grass on carpet.*) It *isn't* rubbish, and you used not to say it was.

GUY. But, my dear, I wasn't married then, and hadn't a carpet. Rubbish ought *not* to be thrown *there*.

GER. You've become terribly matter-of-fact.

GUY. So was the upholsterer when he sent in the bill for the carpet: but I mustn't laugh at you, little woman. I remember years ago, when I was quite a boy, when I was first in love with you, applying the same test with—no not with grass—with, what do you think?

GER. (*interested.*) With what?

GUY. With damson stones out of a damson tart.

GER. Ah, Guy! You liked sweets then; you don't now.

GUY. No; because then they were a treat, now I can always get them. Well, the stones came wrong; I got them all up in a corner of my plate, and for a moment they seemed all right. "She loves me," I cried; when suddenly, secreted under the bowl of a deceptive spoon, I found another. "She loves me not!"

GER. Ah! The spoon was wrong!

GUY. Ah, I felt it was, and being a spoon myself, what do you think I did to make things square and comfortable?

GER. What?

GUY. Put that miserable, untruthful damson stone out of sight by—swallowing it!

GER. (*coming to him and kneeling by him.*) Did you! Oh, my dear Guy, I love to think of you doing a thing like that. How I should have loved to have seen you do it!

GUY. I don't think you would. It went down, or rather *didn't* go down, the wrong way, and I was ignominiously ordered to leave the room; and, moreover, I was very ill.

GER. (*rising.* Ah, Guy, better ill than indifferent. In those days you used to like to talk to me, you used to like to sing with me, you

used to like to read with me, you used to like, oh, you used to *love* to dance with me; now at the ball last night you didn't dance with me once, and every one noticed it.

GUY. Now, Geraldine, upon my life this is inconsistent. Before we were engaged, and when I wanted to dance with you all night long, you wouldn't let me, "because people would notice it;" now, when the position of things is reversed, you say the same thing.

GER. But why don't you ask me to dance?

GUY. Because I don't want to dance any longer. My dancing was a means to an end.

GER. And am I the end?

GUY. Undoubtedly, and I have attained it. (*Goes on reading.*)

GER. (*after a pause.*) I wish you would attain the end of that horrid book.

GUY. But if I did I should only begin another.

GER. And so it would be with me. Oh, Guy!

GUY. (*rousing himself.*) My dear Geraldine, what nonsense you are talking. You are always tormenting yourself with these foolish fancies. What would you have me do?

GER. Why don't you like to dance with me as you used to do?

GUY. Oh, if that is all, I will dance with you at once. Let us clear the room. "May I have the pleasure of the next "round?" If so we can start at once. If, on the contrary, you prefer a "square," let us ring the bell and have up the cook and coachman for our *vis-à-vis*. Will you oblige me with your programme? May I have the pleasure of taking you to supper? Of course the first "extra" is ours?

GER. (*bursting into tears.*) It is ours; it always will be ours; our married life is one horrible long extra; oh, I am so unhappy.

GUY. My darling, what have I said; what have I done; I didn't mean to be indifferent to you last night, upon my word I didn't. You know I have told you over and over again that I always hated dances, and only came to them because I was able to meet you. I never wanted to dance with anyone else; and now that I have you for my dear life-companion, I don't—pardon me for saying so—I don't see why I should waste my time in dancing with you.

GER. (*still sobbing.*) Oh, there is not much fear of your wasting time on me. You are too much interested in your books.

GUY. Now, my darling, is there any great crime in being interested in a book?

GER. No; but, Oh, Guy, I do so feel that the whole thing has been a mistake.

GUY. The thing? What thing?

GER. Our marriage.

GUY. (*impatiently.*) Oh, Geraldine, this is childish.

GER. No, it isn't. If we only had a child, perhaps you would—

GUY. (*interrupting and speaking sternly.*) Geraldine, let me have no more of this. Over and over again I have told you that I am more than satisfied with my present life; more, ten thousand times more than satisfied with you. For the first time in an overworked life I am enjoying peace and quiet, and am enabled to follow the bent of a quiet inclination. If at times I am quiet, if I am absorbed in a book, it is because I am happy, and my mind is at rest. You know how I love and how I trust you; you know that your love is the very essence of my life. I know that your love for me is as disinterested

as is mine for you. My only trouble in life is this continued misgiving on your part that you do not make me happy; your foolish feeling that you do not possess my entire love.

GER. Then you don't think it was a mistake?

GUY. My wife——

GER. Dear Guy, I won't think so any more. Go on with your book, and I will go and gather more flowers. (*turns to go.*)

GUY. Stop; for mercy's sake don't find some new kind of vegetable, or antiquated superstition connected with it, to make yourself miserable with.

GER. No. If I do I'll pull the vegetable, as you call it, and the superstition to pieces at the same time. Now, dear, I've disturbed you enough. Good-bye, I have swallowed the damson stone, it's gone the right way; and I know, oh, I know well, "you love me."

*Exit GERALDINE.*

GUY. Now, what in the world to do with this dear little wife of mine I'm sure I don't know. A better wife surely never lived, and, if she only knew it, no wife could make her husband happier than she does; but, the deuce of it is she *won't* believe it. During the twelve months which we have been married, the feeling, the absurd feeling, that she does not make me happy, has grown upon her to such an extent, and the notion (formed solely, I am certain, on my account) that the whole thing, meaning our marriage, is, as she says, "a mistake," has developed to such a degree, that as to what she will do next to gauge the state of my genuinely unalterable affection for her, I am on continual "tenter-hooks" (whatever they may be) to imagine. Day after day the cry of Wolf! Wolf! rings in my ears, and as often I know that, even if there is anything in the neighborhood in the shape of a wolf, it wears the most palpable sheep's clothing, and acts up to its costume. Last Christmas—shall I ever forget it? a young man appeared on the scene, a young, swarthy, objectionable-looking man. The said man lurks about the house; and poor Geraldine ostentatiously changes the subject when I say I have seen him, and leads the conversation up to him when I happen to ignore him. At length, on a certain night, when the fields and gardens are snow-covered, and I am sitting in my library, I am treated to the sight of my wife leaving the house with a shawl thrown over her, meeting the said man immediately outside my window, and there and then falling into his arms and embracing him. Bah! as though I had read Christmas stories for nothing! I opened the window at once, and quietly said — "Now, Geraldine, which of your brothers is it?" and had the pleasure of being presented to her brother James, who had returned from Australia, and did me the honor of staying with me for two months. She knew he was coming home, she told me afterwards, and had arranged a little plot to test my love for her. As though my love wanted testing. I love her with my whole heart and soul, and yet she is always doubting me, and devising little plans to make me jealous. Oh! if I could only be left alone for a little time, how happy I should be. (*Sighs, takes up book, goes on reading.*)

*Enter GERALDINE, with two letters in her hand, one of which is opened.*

GER. Guy, oh my dear Guy! tell me had you many shares in the "Patagonian Silver Mines!"

GUY (*looking up.*) Yes, dear; I had to some extent invested in that gorgeous undertaking.

GER. Oh, my dear husband, here is a letter to say that the Company is hopelessly ruined. Oh, I am so glad!

GUY. Glad! Well, upon my soul, that's a lively way of looking at it! Are you aware that when a man holds shares in a Company, and that company comes to grief, that man as a shareholder—

GER. Is ruined too. Yes, and that is why I am glad. Oh, my husband! now you shall see how staunch and true your weak-minded wife can be. Now you will see her come out in her true colors. Now, my dearest Guy, now that you are a poor man—

GUY. Geraldine, Geraldine, I am *not* a poor man. Months and months ago I knew that these shares were valueless. Of course, I lose by them, but, so far from ruining me, the loss will hardly affect me.

GER. Won't it? Oh, I am so sorry.

GUY. Why? In the name of—well, in the name of goodness, why?

GER. Because, Guy, I should like you to see me in my true colors. Oh, I should be so brave if you were ruined.

GUY. My dear child, be brave as it is. I always *do* see you in your true colors, and believe me they become you very well.

GER. I'm certain you think I'm only fit to be the pampered wife of a rich man—that if we became poor I should die.

GUY. What, change your colors by *dyeing* them! No, little wife, I'm sure you wouldn't. Your colors are *fast* enough, though I don't believe you know it.

GER. *Fast*, Guy? I'm certain that no woman was ever more quietly dressed than I am at this moment!

GUY. Oh, *don't, don't*; please don't. You twist every thing that I say inside out. Who is that other letter from?

GER. I can't say, I haven't opened it; I was too full of the mines.

GUY. I wish they had been full—

GER. Go on—say it. You wish they had been full of *me*. In other words, you wish I was buried in them.

GUY. (*kissing her.*) For one reason, yes—because then there would have been a treasure in them. Come, give me that letter (*opens letter and reads.*) Oh, here is good news. It is from George, my dear old friend George. He is coming to stay with us, and will be here, —why, he will be here at noon to-day. This letter must have been delayed, for it is past ~~that~~ now. I *am* so glad.

GER. (*coldly.*) Do you refer to Captain George?

GUY. Of course I do. To what other George could I refer? My dear old friend. He may be here at any moment; and he evidently means to pay us a good long visit.

GER. I am very sorry for it.

GUY. Sorry for it, Geraldine! Why?

GER. Because I do not like him.

GUY. Not like my best and oldest friend?

GER. I am sorry to have to say it, but I do *not* like him.

GUY. And may I again ask, why?

GER. He is a not a true friend to men; he is not a sincere man with women. He is just the man to estrange man from wife. I say again I am very sorry he is coming to stay here.

GUY. Geraldine, you cannot understand what serious things you are saying—what grave charges you are making. George is my very dear and very old friend, and as such he ought to receive a hearty welcome from you as from me.

GER. And in return for it what will he do? Induce you to go out with him to hunt, to fish, and to shoot; induce you to sit up at night to smoke, to drink, and to play cards. In a word, he will do everything to break up our quiet life, and make you dissatisfied with it and with me.

GUY. He will do nothing of the sort. While he is my guest I shall, as I have done before, devote a certain amount of time to him, and try to make his visit a pleasant one. I shall do so, Geraldine, at the risk of making you jealous of him, for it is jealousy which prompts you to say all these foolish things; and unless you join me in welcoming him I shall be terribly annoyed and hurt. Hark! I hear the sound of his carriage wheels; I will go to him. I hate, my darling, to have to speak so sternly to you, but you have brought it on yourself. Pray remember what I have said.

*Exit GUY.*

GER. He has left me without a kiss! For the first time since we have been married he has left me without a kiss! Oh, what can I do to make him love me? How can I render his married life a happy one? He is so good, and so tender, and yet I know he finds so much wanting in me that he will soon think, as I think now, that our marriage was a mistake. He is too satisfied, he cannot be made jealous of me, and, therefore, I am convinced he no longer loves me. Oh, if I could only rouse him from this terrible state of lethargy. Stay, this Captain George, a man who would flirt with any woman who would give him the least encouragement—his great friend, too—why should I not avail myself of this opportunity, and once more try a little innocent stratagem to regain my dear husband's waning affection? The end justifies the means, and I will do it.

*Re-enter GUY with CAPTAIN GEORGE.*

GUY. Once more, dear old boy, ten thousand welcomes. I needn't introduce you to Geraldine, need I?

GEORGE. And I need not ask Mrs. Gilbert how she is? The answer to that question is conveyed in her face. She never looked more charming. (*They shake hands.*)

GER. (*aside.*) The same as ever! I shall find a very willing accomplice in my little plot. (*Aloud.*) We are so glad to see you, Captain George; all the more so because you promise to pay us a long visit. You will not outstay your welcome, of that you may be sure.

GUY. Well put, little woman. That's the way in which a wife should welcome her husband's friend. Eh, George?

GEORGE. A very pleasant way, truly; but I hope Mrs. Gilbert regards me as a friend of her own, as well as a friend of her husband's.

GER. Why, Captain George, of course I do.

GUY. Why, my dear boy, of course she does. Well, and now, what shall be our next programme—lunch?

GER. We breakfasted so late that I ordered lunch at two o'clock—but if Captain George—

GEORGE. My dear Mrs. Gilbert, I regret to say that I have not

breakfasted at all—and let me see—it is now one o'clock; the great question which occurs to me is, what can I do to get up an appetite by two o'clock.

GER. Oh, I know; sit in the house and drink bitters and something.

GUY. I know a better way than that. Walk through the turnips with me, and get a shot at the partridges which I know to be there.

GEORGE. That sounds better.

GUY. Good. Then I'll go and get a couple of guns, put on thick boots and gaiters, rig you up in ditto, ditto, for there won't be time to get out your own things; and then Geraldine shall see what we can do for her larder at two o'clock. I'll be back directly.

*Exit GUY.*

GER. (*aside.*) I shall commence at once. (*Aloud.*) I cannot tell you, Captain George, how glad we—how glad *I* am to see you. In this quiet country house, we—or perhaps I should say *I*—lead such a lonely, monotonous, solitary life, that any visitor is welcome; that you of all others are welcome, “goes without saying.”

GEORGE. It is very pleasant, Mrs. Gilbert, to hear you say so. Yes, I can fancy that your life here, charming as the place is, is a little dull. Poor Guy must get moped a good deal.

GER. Oh, pardon me, he does not get anything of the sort. He is as happy as the day is long; he is completely wrapped up in his books, and wants nothing more.

GEORGE. So! But you. Surely you want something beyond this miserable, dull routine?

GER. To tell the truth, I do. Ah, Captain George, how little we know ourselves. Before I was married I used to say that the very height of my ambition would be to live in the quiet country alone with my husband; that I should need no society but his; that outside my own little household I should neither want nor have interests. Now, at the end of one short year I find that all my ideas have changed, and that I am dying of *ennui*.

GEORGE (*aside.*) By Jove! here is a change indeed. (*Aloud.*) Ah, Mrs. Gilbert, I can well understand you, and knowing your nature and Guy's, I always felt sure it would be so. Can you then now find some excuse for those married ladies who endeavor to make life endurable by making a few pleasures for themselves, and upon whom you were at one time so severe?

GER. Excuse! Indeed I can. I tell you I have altered, and I can see now that at one time I used to think and talk a great deal of nonsense. Ah! I did not know then what it was to have a neglectful husband—what it was to—Stay! what am I saying? Guy is your friend, and you will tell him.

GEORGE. Mrs. Gilbert! Can you think so badly of me? Anything that you say to me is in confidence, and is regarded by me as sacred.

GER. You do not mind, then, that your friend's wife should give you her confidence?

GEORGE. Mind! I feel honored—Mrs. Gilbert, Geraldine—I may call you Geraldine when we are alone, may I not?

GER. (*Looks at him but does not answer.*)

GEORGE (*takes her hand and presses it.*) Ah, now we understand each other. Tell me all. And so Guy neglects you?

GER. He does. And I am unhappy, and I want to ask you, I know you will——

GEORGE. My dearest Geraldine, I will do anything in the world for you. Alas! I always foresaw this. Guy is a good fellow, and all that sort of thing, but as utterly incapable of appreciating you as he is of flying, he always reminds me of a bat; he's as blind as one, he is as——

GER. Stop, you must remember that bats *can* fly

GEORGE. Yes, but they always fly at the most absurd hours, and in the beautiful sunshine use their wings to hook themselves up to unpleasant rafters in the dustiest corners of mouldy old barns. Now that is exactly the case with Guy. He doesn't understand his good fortune in having you for his wife, and never will.

GER. But what am I to do?

GEORGE. You must do, Geraldine, as many other young wives have to do who find out, too late, that they have thrown themselves away. You must make a life for yourself and arrange for your own pleasures, as your husband always arranges for his. Have your own friends as he has his.

GER. Is this what other wives have to do?

GEORGE. Of course it is: and, once having overcome their prejudices, very pleasant times they manage to have of it. Now I must tell you candidly that until this moment I had very little hope for you, and my heart ached for you. I always believed that you were one of those absurd women who regard everything from such a serious point of view. That you would find out what your husband was like and fall in love with some one else, I was certain——

GER. (*eagerly*.) Captain George, hear me——

GEORGE. In a moment I will. I was going to say, that you would of course fall in love with some one else; but I thought you would want the favored individual to run away with you, and so make a regular scene of it, but now that I find I am mistaken I do not hesitate, my darling Geraldine, to tell you of my love for you. Ah, do not be startled. Remember, you must before all things overcome your prejudices. I tell you, dearest, I love you, and, now that we understand each other, what happiness may not be ours.

*Again takes her hand, and is endeavoring to draw her towards him and to kiss her, she resisting, when GUY is heard without.*

GUY. (*calling*.) George, George.

GEORGE. Your husband! Be careful that he does not notice anything.

GER., *greatly agitated, sinks into a chair.*

*Enter GUY.*

GUY. Come along, George, and get your boots on. I'm sorry I've been so long.

GEORGE. I'm not at all sorry, for Mrs. Gilbert's society has been charming. But now I'm quite ready for you.

*Exit CAPTAIN GEORGE.*

*GUY is following him, when GER. seizes him by the arm and detains him.*

GER. (*still much agitated*.) Guy, stay with me. I have something terrible to say to you. But I must tell you this moment, this instant——

GUY. Not now, little woman, after lunch, we really have so little time now.

GER. Oh, Guy, dear Guy! Don't leave me now, *do, do*, hear me.

GUY. Well, if it must be so, what is it? More suspicions?

GER. No, oh no, would it were only a suspicion? Guy, I have been insulted, horribly, terribly insulted, and you have been most cruelly wronged.

GUY. What *do* you mean?

GER. It means, it seems almost too dreadful to tell, and yet if I don't tell you this moment I feel as though I should die. It means that the man you call your friend—Captain George—

GUY. Well, what has he been doing?

GER. This. He has been telling me that he loves me, Guy, that you cannot appreciate me, and that he and I—

GUY. Oh, Geraldine, Geraldine, Wolf! Wolf! More plots to test me! More Christmas stories raked up! I know all about it, dear!

GER. No, no. Oh, Guy, do believe me pray, pray believe me. This is no invention, no plot. I know I have been very foolish before, but this is true. *indeed, indeed*, this is true.

GUY. Listen to me, for I must talk to you very seriously. You do not know what you are saying, or doing, or how much mischief, if I was foolish enough to believe you, you might be making. These little masquerades got up with a brother at Christmas time, are, so long as you do not take cold, all very well. I am sorry that you should think them necessary, but I do not much mind them. In this case it is very different. George is my very dear old friend, and I love and trust him implicitly. Think what your story might cause between us.

GER. He is a false and wicked friend—

GUY. Hush! we will speak no more of him, for I will not wrong him by another word. I come to an even more important matter—yourself. No man ever dared to tell the wife of his friend that he loved her unless he had received from her a *very, very* great amount of bold encouragement. Hence it follows that before I suspect *him*, I must suspect *you*.

GER. Ah, but I *did* encourage him. I was foolish, and I meant no harm.

GUY. Enough, Geraldine! I will hear no more. You are my wife, my dearly loved wife, and are above suspicion; George is my old and tried friend, and I have already insulted him by hearing so much.

GER. And he will stay with us?

GUY. Of course he will stay with us.

GER. Oh what have I done that you will not believe me? Oh, Guy, my husband!

GUY. Hush! he is coming.

*Enter CAPTAIN GEORGE.*

GEORGE. I am ready at last, Guy. I found I couldn't manage with your boots so had to get my own after all. Shall we be off?

GUY. In one moment. Stay here, and I will be back directly.

*Exit GUY.*

GEORGE. (*eagerly*.) Did he suspect anything?

GER. (*quietly*.) He suspects nothing.

GEORGE. Oh, my darling, what an escape we had! in future we must be more cautious—we must arrange—

GER. Stop! and hear what I have to say. When I spoke to you a short time ago, I had some very foolish ideas in my head, and said things which I not only did not believe, but did not even mean. Those words of mine caused you to think that you were speaking to a woman of a class among whom you, no doubt, number a large acquaintance, and you then dared, under your own friend's roof, to profess love—oh, such *love*; it is profanity to use the word—to your friend's wife. At the moment when I was endeavoring to make you understand the mistake which you had made, he came in, and directly we were alone together I told him *all*. I told him *all*, and he will not believe me, and he is as much your friend as ever. Well, your treachery has done this amount of good; it has at length opened my eyes and enabled me to understand the beauty of my dear husband's character. Where he loves he is incapable of suspicion, but were he to suspect, even in the least degree, his wife, or even his friend, so cruel would the blow be to him that it would break his heart. Good, loving, and loyal himself, he believes others to be good, loving, and loyal; and henceforth it shall be my care that his goodness and trust shall be better rewarded than they have been in the past. He shall suspect nothing—not even *you*. Stay your time out here, Captain George, and we will, for his sake, appear as friends; but remember that I shall always hate and despise you.

GUY, *who has entered while she has been speaking, and has stood at back, comes forward.*

GUY. No, Geraldine, you will do nothing of the sort.

GER. (*rushing to him.*) Oh, you have overheard us. Then *now* you will believe me.

GUY. My dear child, I believe everything and everybody. Now I must make a confession.

GER. A confession? You?

GUY. Yes, I. Know then that *I*, too, have been plotting. In a long letter which I wrote lately to my dear old friend George, I told him how happy I was with a charming wife, who only had one fault.

GEORGE. A wonderful woman, indeed.

GUY. And that one fault was a silly little habit of crying, "Wolf! Wolf!" when there was no Wolf. When he arrived this morning I told him directly that "Wolf" was being cried all over the place, and he said, "Let me be a Wolf, and I'll cure her at once."

GER. And that was what you did?

GEORGE. Exactly. I was a Wolf all the time, and when I saw your charming indignation, Mrs. Gilbert, I felt like one.

GUY. And so the story is told.

GER. Yes and I'm glad it is only a story. Captain George, I beg your pardon; I don't hate or despise you; but oh, how you must, both of you, despise me.

GUY. Oh, you foolish Geraldine! There you are again—Wolf! Wolf!

GER. (*sadly.*) But *I* deserve to be despised. Isn't there a Wolf now?

GUY. (*kissing her.*) Not the ghost of one.

CURTAIN.

## NUMBER TWO.

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### CHARACTERS.

MR. GRUNDLEBURY.

MRS. GRUNDLEBURY.

TOM ROBINSON, an actor.

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SCENE.—*Room in Grundlebury's House. Window in F. Entrances R. and L. Tables, Chairs, Sofa, &c. GRUNDLEBURY discovered pacing the stage.*

GRUNDLEBURY. Pretty pass for a man to be hectored in this way by the woman he has made his wife! If I do this, it's wrong; If I don't do it, why didn't I?—that's how she goes on from morning to night. There's no pleasing her. Yet I could stand it all but for her eternal praises of "her poor dear George,—her poor dear 'first.'" That's how she looks at us, and I daresay she's anticipating the time when she can tick off the fingers of one hand to Christian names. No. 1, George; No. 2, that's me, and if this kind of thing continues, there'll soon be a vacancy for No. 3. (*Bell rings.*) Who's that?

(*Voice without, R.*) In here, do you say? Never mind, I'll make my way. Here we are.

*Enter* ROBINSON, R.

GRUN. Tom!

ROB. Yes, old boy, and as hearty as ever; how's yourself? (*Shaking hands.*)

GRUN. Don't ask me. Can't you see a sonata of compounded misery in the lines of my face?

ROB. Well, I can't say I can—but I was never much of a musician, so you'll have to spin out the yarn yourself, if you want me to know what you mean.

GRUN. Ah! it's a miserable tale, Tom, and I daresay I look miserable enough too, only you don't like to say it.

ROB. Well, you do look a miserable object, if you want me to say it; but as to reading the lines on your face, I might as well try to decipher the hieroglyphics on Cleopatra's Needle.

GRUN. Ah! you actors are always looking after the points—ha, ha, ha!

ROB. There! There's the man that wants to make me believe he's miserable. Why the only thing that I see miserable about you is your attempt at a joke.

GRUN. Ah! Tom, I can't help it. You bring to my mind the old happy days of puns and punch and deviltry.

ROB. Well, let me hear the story: perhaps a little puns and punch and deviltry might get rid of your misery for you.

GRUN. It's more serious than that, Tom.

ROB. What is it, then? Have you fallen out with your old aunt who's got a fortune to leave?

GRUN. No.

ROB. Well, what then?

GRUN. I've married.

ROB. The Devil!

GRUN. No; a widow.

ROB. Ha, ha, ha! Well that's a good hit.

GRUN. (*Angrily.*) Glad you think so. Thank you.

ROB. Come, Harry, old fellow, don't get vexed. I didn't mean anything. Let's know all about it, and I'll see what can be done.

GRUN. If you see anything that can be undone, I'll be mightily obliged to you.

ROB. Of course I can. You just let me know your grievance, and I'll set it right in a jiffy.

GRUN. I thought her a paragon, Tom, of all the womanly virtues, and when she told me she never knew what love was till she met me, I couldn't resist her, but just kissed her, and asked her to be my wife.

ROB. Well.

GRUN. Well, she consented, and in the first quarter of the honeymoon began finding fault with everything I did, and quoted her first husband as a model of perfection.

ROB. Ah! I know her.

GRUN. Do you, indeed?

ROB. That is, I know lots of women like her. And now I've got your case in a nutshell. You've married a widow, and she so praises her first husband, in and out of season, that you wish the poor man had never died.

GRUN. Now you've got it.

ROB. You don't know the sex; this is a sign that she loves you as dearly as it's possible for a woman to love a man.

GRUN. You don't say so?

ROB. Fact—can prove it. She is so afraid that you won't love her enough, that she thinks the best way to increase your love is by impressing on you your own unworthiness. This she tries to do by continually reminding you that a much better man than you can ever hope to be, viz: her first husband, loved her to distraction, and therefore, you ought to be ready to worship the ground she walks on.

GRUN. Well, that's a very good idea, but I don't see much comfort in it.

ROB. I told you I'd help you out of the difficulty.

GRUN. You did, but—

ROB. "But me no buts," as I daresay Shakespeare has said somewhere; I have said I will help you out of your scrape. I will. I've got a plan; It's in my valise outside.

GRUN. Rubbish!

ROB. Well, it isn't much more, for it's merely my theatrical wardrobe. Trade's bad just now, and I'm giving entertainments; "*People About Town*," and all that kind of thing. Now, when did your—your predecessor die?

GRUN. During the time Perkins and Gordon were leaders in the Chinese war.

ROB. Good. Where is he buried?

GRUN. Somewhere out under the Bohea bushes. He left no money, so they planted him where he'd do the most good.

ROB. Good! It's as clear as daylight. I'll dress up as No. 1, and if I don't make it easy for you for the rest of your life, call me a dunce.

GRUN. I daresay I will.

ROB. Oh! no you wont. When I frighten Mrs. Grundlebury with just the possibility of her losing you, she'll be quiet for the rest of her life.

GRUN. She'll just laugh at you for your pains. She has plenty of proof that he is dead.

ROB. What is proof to a woman? You just give me a few particulars and I'll start the game. In the first place, what was her husband's name?

GRUN. George.

ROB. Good. What was the color of his hair?

GRUN. Brown.

ROB. Good. Now, what is her name?

GRUN. Jemima.

ROB. Just one thing more. Where was she living?

GRUN. At Brooklyn.

ROB. Splendid. Now, you just let me have a room to rig myself out in, then manage to leave her here by herself. You listen outside, and when I cough hard three times, come in.

GRUN. Very well, I'm agreeable. It will be rather amusing to see someone else come in for a little of the power of her tongue.

(*Voice without.*) Henry! Henry!

GRUN. That's Mrs. Grundlebury.

ROB. I've no doubt of it. Lead on, I'll follow thee. (*Exeunt L.*)

*Enter MRS. GRUNDLEBURY, R.*

MRS. G. Where are you? Not here. Ran away when he heard me coming. Well, I never thought I could have become such a tyrant as—well I must confess it—as I am. When George was alive, I often wished for a quiet life, and to have an end of his horrid, complaining temper; and now that I have a quiet life and a husband who would love me if I would only let him, I torment him to death. I'm sorry for it, but I can't help it. Still, I must try and treat him better.

*Enter GRUNDLEBURY, L.*

Well, Henry, have you sent James for those patterns to Smithson's?

GRUN. Patterns! I'm blessed if I haven't quite forgotten all about them.

MRS. G. Quite forgotten all about them! Was there ever such a man? Didn't I tell you I wanted them particularly? How can I write to Mrs. Tumbleville without them? But you don't care. Poor dear George, when he was alive, didn't want to have my wishes drummed into his ears.

GRUN. Neither do I.

MRS. G. Hold your tongue, sir. Poor George used to anticipate my wishes—

GRUN. So will I, Madam. You'll wish me out of the room presently. I anticipate that wish. *Au revoir.* (*Exit R.*)

MRS. G. I never saw him so cool before. I'd better be careful or he'll defy me. (*An uncertain step, like that of a man with an artificial leg, is heard approaching.*) Good heavens! who can this be?

(*Voice without.*) In there, you say, Very well, that will do, thank you.

*Enter ROB., L., dressed in an old uniform. He carries his right arm in a sling, and wears a patch over his right eye. His face is darkened as though from exposure to the sun, and he wears long tawny whiskers. He walks as though his right leg was artificial.*

ROB. Jemima!

MRS. G. Sir!

ROB. (*Clasping her in his left arm.*) Jemima! this to me!

MRS. G. To you, sir! Who are you, sir?

ROB. Who am I, Jemima? Oh, Jemima, think of the happy hours we spent in our quiet little house at Brooklyn, and don't break my heart.

MRS. G. (*Agitated.*) We spent! What do you mean?

ROB. Oh! Jemima, look in my face and see if you can't find that last kiss you gave me, hiding away under the tan of an eastern sun.

MRS. G. Kiss I gave you! If you do not instantly tell me who you are, I'll have you kicked from the house for a tramp.

ROB. I've tramped far enough to find you. Oh! Jemima do not play with my feelings. Is this the reception I ought to receive after my long absence and the valor I displayed under the fire of a Chinese sun and a savage enemy?

MRS. G. Who are you?

ROB. Who am I, Jemima! Look at this mole on the back of my neck and tell me who I am. (*Mrs. G. turns away.*) Bring to your mind that evening when one who loved you—who loves you now, Jemima!—brought home a bracelet to you, and you in fun turned up the sleeve of his coat to try it on his arm, and there beheld a trademark—birth-mark I mean—a strawberry with a blue stem. (*Taking his arm out of the sling hastily.*) Look here, Jemima. Look here, Jemima. Turn up this sleeve and you will see the identical strawberry. (*Aside—putting his arm hastily in the sling.*) It must be the other arm though. (*Aloud.*) Who am I now, Jemima?

MRS. G. (*Agitated.*) Good heavens! You are not—

ROB. I am, Jemima. Joy! Joy! I am your long-lost husband.

MRS. G. Stand back, or I'll scream.

ROB. Jemima, what do you mean?

MRS. G. My husband didn't have a straw-colored beard.

ROB. The hot sun of China, Jemima. You know what poets say about golden hair hiding all the stray sunbeams and the like. There were so many knocking about out there that I daresay I haven't combed them all out yet.

MRS. G. But then your face, your voice—

ROB. The sun, Jemima.

MRS. G. Your leg?

ROB. The enemy, Jemima. But that's no blemish, it's what many a gallant man is sighing for. Splendid invention—cork leg. A reg-

ular testimonial to a man's valor, and quite an additional dignity to his gait. See (*walking*) I never could do that before. Besides it's awfully handy. You can tread on the corns as much as ever you like, and it's a splendid preventative of hydrophobia. It's my very proudest possession, quite unique. Just run in a pin till you see. 'Twont hurt me in the least. Have you got one?

MRS. G. Ugh!

ROB. Run in a pin, you'll be quite amused. Think I'm going to scream—not I. Just see.

MRS. G. How did you escape?

ROB. I didn't escape, and that's why I'm here. I was taken prisoner because my leg was broken and I couldn't run away.

MRS. G. (*Aside*.) Can it be true that this is my first husband? He knows me, calls me Jemima, I should not have recognized him. (*Aloud*.) How did you know I was here?

ROB. My heart, Jemima—

MRS. G. Your fiddlestick? How did you find me?

ROB. I was walking along on the opposite side of the street, the people all standing to admire my leg—I am proud of it, Jemima—run in a pin, will you?—very well, never mind—I was walking, as I said, the other side of the street, and chancing to look up, I saw you, and of course, I recognised *you* instantly. Oh! the joy of that moment.

MRS. G. (*Aside*.) Oh! dear, what will become of me. (*To ROB*.) You wretch, why did you come here?

ROB. Well, Jemima, there wasn't much use going to Brooklyn, when you—

MRS. G. Hold your tongue, I—

ROB. (*In a military rage*.) This to me, ma'am. I hold my tongue, ma'am! How dare you talk to your husband in that manner? Who's master, I'd like to know?

MRS. G. (*Throwing herself on the sofa, crying*.) Oh! dear, oh! dear, what shall I do?

ROB. What shall you do, ma'am? Do what you ought to do. Just dry your eyes, smarten yourself up, and say you are glad to see me, and tell me what you've been doing while I've been away.

MRS. G. What I've been doing? Oh! I can't, I can't. O! give me my hat and I will go home to my mother. I can't stop here—I will never stop with you.

ROB. Not stop with me, Jemima! What do you mean? Come, come, I didn't mean to be cross. We will go back, Jemima, to our old house at Brooklyn, for I'm very fond of it. By Jove though, won't the girls stare? They'll shout when they see me coming—here comes the—oh! that devilish pain, I forget that this arm is in a sling till I get one of those gentle reminders. But I say won't they stare when they see the patch, the sling, and the leg? But they're all on the right side, eh? Ha, ha, ha. We'll be all the rage at Brooklyn, Jemima; there's nothing so popular as the military man, and when they learn I've been to China, and see me walk—Jemima, you can't tell how proud I am of this leg. Beautiful cork, light as a feather. The cork has become a veritable tree—a boot-tree, ha, ha, ha. But now, Jemima, let us talk sensibly, tell me all about yourself, and how you've been living, or I'll start and relate my adventures. Shall I tell you how I got this leg?

MRS. G. Don't talk of that horrid leg, I hate to hear about it.

ROB. Only for fun, you know.

MRS. G. Ugh! Don't speak of it.

ROB. Ah! I understand! sensitive feelings injured by anxiety—shock to the system—all right by-and-by though, Jemima, and then you'll be as proud of it as I am.

MRS. G. Yes, yes.

ROB. Bound to. And now won't you give me one kiss? Come, that's right.

MRS. G. Don't, don't, I can't.

ROB. Not to your husband? Don't jump about, love, or you'll injure my arm. Stand so. Why do you tremble. (*Coughs three times.*) Mere nervousness, you know. (*Embraces her with left arm, and kisses her.*) Enter GRUNDLEBURY, L.) Hallo! Jemima, who is this?

GRUN. And, hallo, sir, who are you?

MRS. G. (*Confused.*) Henry, this—this is—my brother.

GRUN. }  
ROB. } Brother!

MRS. G. (*More confused.*) I—I mean my cousin.

GRUN. I never knew you had one.

ROB. Neither did I.

MRS. G. (*Making a warning gesture at ROBINSON.*) I—I never spoke of him. He has travelled.

GRUN. Oh! Well, Jem, I hope he will stay with us awhile. (*Putting his arm round her waist.*) I have sent James for those patterns, and I told him to call in at the library—

ROB. (*catching MRS. G. by the sleeve.*) Here, I say, you know—

MRS. G. Go away. Sit down.

ROB. What do you mean, ma'am? Come and sit with me.

GRUN. Your cousin is rather forward, Jemima. (*Looking at ROBINSON.*) But even cousins should know how to respect a lady.

ROB. Respect, be hanged—

GRUN. Sir, do you—?

MRS. G. (*Crying.*) Oh dear, they'll kill me, they'll kill me. You are both bad men.

GRUN. }  
ROB. } My dear—

GRUN. How dare you address my wife as "your" dear?

ROB. You impertinent scoundrel, how dare you call my wife your dear?

GRUN. Your wife, sir! Are you mad?

ROB. You are, sir. Ask the lady if you don't believe me. Ask my wife, sir.

GRUN. What does it all mean, Jemima?

ROB. Aye! What does it all mean? I should like to know.

MRS. G. (*Hysterical.*) Oh! Henry! I—I— (*Cries.*)

GRUN. Control yourself, dear.

MRS. G. I—I don't know what to do. I thought I was a—a widow when I married you. (*Cries.*)

GRUN. *Thought* you were a widow, Jemima!

MRS. G. Yes—yes. But I wasn't. There—he—he is. (*Cries.*)

GRUN. He?

ROB. Yes he. The veritable he—the hero. And do you mean to say, Jemima, that you've married this man?

MRS. G. Yes. I—I thought you were dead.

GRUN. Oh! darling, what shall I do?

MRS. G. And what shall I do? I cannot live from you, and to go to that—with—the cork leg.

ROB. Perfection, madam, simply perfection. (*To GRUNDLEBURY.*) Just run in a pin will you? You'll be surprised.

GRUN. Darling, I often regretted marrying you, when you plagued my life with your reiterated praise of your first husband, but now---

MRS. G. Oh! darling, I was a fool, I only did it to make you jealous. But I loved you better than I ever did him.

GRUN. My darling! And if we were free now?

MRS. G. Oh! Henry. Now that it is too late I can see my folly. I would be a true and really loving wife, Henry, if only I had the power.

ROB. (*Pulling off his disguise.*) That power, good lady, I hereby bestow on you.

MRS. G. Not my husband!

GRUN. No, Jem, but my very good friend and very good actor—Tom Robinson—

ROB. Now visiting this city with an entertainment invented and given entirely by himself, entitled "People About Town," which has not received the unqualified approval of Matthew Arnold, the Corean Ambassadors, and the Queen of the Cannibal Islands, but which would undoubtedly, receive the highest commendations from these august personages, if they, in common with the enlightened inhabitants of this neighborhood, had had the pleasure and opportunity of witnessing—

MRS. G. (*Bewildered.*) But—but—

ROB. You must pardon, madam, our little *ruse*. Your husband told me he was perfectly sick of his position as "Number Two," and sick of hearing the continual praises of "Number One," and I undertook to prove to him, that you love him better than all others on earth. Now that you are both convinced that you were made for each other, there is no earthly reason why you should not be happy as the day is long, and call Tom Robinson your best friend from this time forth for evermore.

MRS. G. And believe me, Tom—shall I call you Tom?

ROB. If you want to make me the happiest mortal on earth.

MRS. G. Believe me, Tom, I am very thankful to you, and confess with all due humility, that I richly deserved the trick you played me.

GRUN. I can only say, Tom, that your giving me my own little wife again, hasn't strengthened our friendship one iota, because that is impossible.

ROB. You've made me as happy as you are yourselves, and in fact I may say, we are a happy family.

CURTAIN.

# A FIRESIDE STORY.

## CHARACTERS.

REGINALD BLANDFORD.

HARRY BLANDFORD, disguised as Stranger.

MRS. BLANDFORD.

BELLA and LAURA.

SCENE—*A drawing-room in Mrs. BLANDFORD's House: Window, c. ; curtains drawn close. Fireplace, R. ; Chimney-glass, Clock, &c. &c. Door, L. ; Piano, L., over which hangs the portrait of a young man. Easy Chair, Table, &c. BELLA and LAURA discovered arranging holly in some vases. The candles are lighted, and a bright fire is burning in the grate.*

BELLA. Another Christmas come again. How pretty this holly makes a room look! Nature mixes her colors so well; these bright red berries, and this lovely green, how good a contrast! Can anything be more charming?

LAURA. No! It is perfect.

BELLA. Not a bad idea for a new dress—green, trimmed with coral; or white, with bouquets of holly. Eh! what a happy time is Christmas! There are few homes in our dear country that are not made gayer and brighter when it comes.

LAURA. True. Yet I sometimes think on these anniversaries if we have a sorrow we feel it all the more.

BELLA. Darling coz., I forbid your having any sorrows, any griefs which I may not share, and thus lighten the burden for you. Why, I am a very Atlas in strength. If the world were upon my back I should still carry a light heart beneath it.

LAURA. I sometimes envy you your spirits. But you see, some sink while others swim.

BELLA. Yes, you would have been drowned long ago but for the H: mane Society of Cousin Bella.

LAURA. You are of an age to which care is almost a stranger. Enjoy your youth, dear Bella; mine is passed and gone.

BELLA. What at twenty-three? for I vow you are not a day older: so, at twenty-three you don Minerva's helmet, wear spectacles, and set yourself up for an old maid. Ah! well, I am content with Folly's cap, and I mean to make its bells jingle to a merry tune while I am young, and can enjoy their music.

LAURA. How you rattle on—chirp! chirp! like some merry cricket.

BELLA. A cricket! No, no—like a woman, you should have said.

LAURA. A woman, at sixteen?

BELLA. Yes. If a train does not make a woman, I should like to know what does.

LAURA. The mind.

BELLA. Ah! now you're getting prosaic. You will soon be dull and drowsy if you talk like that. I shall drop the argument.

LAURA. Oh, you beat a retreat.

BELLA. The contest is unequal: you are too clever for me. The Wars of the Roses would soon have come to an end if you and I had been York and Lancaster. But we must get on with our work, or mamma will be here before we are ready for her. Come, here is more holly to put about the room. You decorate the pictures, while I do the looking-glass. (*She takes some pieces of holly, and goes to the chimney-glass, R.*)

LAURA. The pictures! Yes, let me do the pictures.

BELLA. (*Looking at herself in the glass.*) I wonder how I shall look when I have gray hair. Powder, they say, is very becoming, then why not gray hair: if they have it they seem ashamed of it, except dear mamma—but then—her hair is not gray with age, but with grief and sorrow, so I suppose that makes all the difference. What a color I have got to be sure, and a color is very becoming to me. How brightly it makes my eyes shine!

LAURA. Do you call that doing your work, pray?

BELLA. Yes, the study of womankind in that great book of nature—a looking-glass. What nonsense people talk when they say a mirror flatters one. How are you getting on?

LAURA. Faster than you. I have all but finished. (*She has decorated all the pictures save the one over the piano, before which she now stands gazing.*)

BELLA. I am glad to hear it. Many hands make light work, says the proverb.

LAURA (*aside.*) His portrait!

BELLA. I have finished. (*She sees LAURA in the glass, then turns and looks at her for a moment, and creeps gently to her side.*) His picture! Darling Laura, how thoughtless of me. Forgive me. I should have done this. (*Kisses her.*) You are crying.

LAURA. Yes, darling, I cannot help it. I loved him so much.

BELLA. Dear brother Harry—I loved him also, but not half as much as you, I daresay. I was only his sister, you see, and a sister's love doesn't go for as much as another person's. Besides, five years ago I was younger than I am now; of course I was. Is it five years, Laura, since he went away?

LAURA. Five long years. At first the separation, bitter as it was, seemed softened by its necessity. But oh! the weary, dreary time. Bella, I sometimes think he *must* be dead.

BELLA. No! no! Let us hope still.

LAURA. Hope! My heart has lived so long upon that word, and now comes the dreadful time when I no longer cling to it.

BELLA. Don't say so, pray don't. Think of poor mamma.

LAURA. Perhaps she, like me, has ceased to hope. It is that which has blanched her hair and dimmed her sight, but she bears up for all our sakes. I alone read her inmost thoughts. Why should we de-lude each other with hope, while despair is in our hearts?

BELLA. Well, I never will believe like you. He will return *some* day. Was he really forced to go?

LAURA. Yes, dear child. Your father's death left your mother but scantily provided. While he lived his income was a good one; he had but little property to leave behind him.

BELLA. I always thought that income and property were one and the same thing.

LAURA. Not exactly. Since your father's death the Ceylon estate has come into the family, but its returns were so small, owing to mismanagement, or some wrong-doing of the agent out there, that Harry resolved to sift the business thoroughly, and if possible set matters right. He went. You know the rest.

BELLA. I do. I wish brother Reginald had gone, we should not have missed him half as much. But that's always the way.

LAURA. Hush, Bella. You must not talk thus. Reginald is a good fellow after his fashion.

BELLA. Well, if I must not say it I shall always think it, so it comes to the same thing in the end. Why didn't Reginald go? With his courage and his love of adventure, and all that manliness which he boasts so much about: why, he was the very man to go to Ceylon, or any other place.

LAURA. Yes, but you see it was no question of courage or of adventure, but one of brains. Harry was not only the elder of the two, but more clever than Reginald. (*Looking at the picture again.*)

BELLA. Now if you stand gazing at that picture you will begin to cry again, and then mamma will know it, for if she cannot see your tears, she will guess you have been, by your voice.

LAURA. (*Calmly.*) We have not put the holly on his picture yet.

BELLA. We will do it together. Come, sister, for you are indeed my sister. (*They place holly on the picture.*) Hark, just in time, here is mamma. (*The door L. opens, REGINALD appears.*) No, it is Reginald.

REGINALD. Ah, Laura! by Jove, it is a cold night; the snow is falling fast. Just what I like to see at Christmas. Make up the fire, Bella.

BELLA. Lazy fellow that you are. Just make it up yourself, while I go to fetch mamma. Put on a log of wood, sweep the hearth, and have all comfortable when I come back. (*Exit BELLA, L.*)

REG. (*Aside.*) I should like to tame that little Tartar. Well, Laura, here we are with Christmas close upon us. Not that I care much for Christmas Day, or New Year's Day; I am always glad when they are over. What do you say?

LAURA. I don't quite agree with you, Reginald.

REG. You never do.

LAURA. Because I cannot look at things in the same light as you do.

REG. If you did we should be better friends.

LAURA. Are we not friends, then?

REG. After a fashion. I don't like the fashion. Look here, Laura, you are a clever woman but clever women sometimes lack common sense.

LAURA. And men never do, I suppose.

REG. Not so often. We are out in the world—you shut up at home. We have the rough path to tread—you the smooth. We become more matter-of-fact, more—what shall I say?—

LAURA. Hardened.

REG. Well, if you like the word—I don't think it a pleasant one.

It is rough, but I am a rough fellow, and you think so, no doubt. I want polish. I know I have not got those accomplishments, those soft words, those arts, which go so far to win some women; but then you are not one of those women to be taken by all that sort of nonsense. I have a heart, Laura, as full of love as ever Harry had.

LAURA. *Had!* Why do you always speak of him as in the past. He may be living yet. He may return to us—perhaps he is not dead.

REG. Perhaps. But when a fellow goes away, and stays away five years, giving no tidings, baffling all search, his existence becomes rather doubtful. Now for the common sense which I mentioned just now—where is it? Is it common sense to go on for ever living on his memory? Laura! one word, while we are yet alone. I love you.

LAURA. Reginald! (*Going.*)

REG. Nay, hear me. You shall hear me. (*Taking her hand and detaining her.*) For years, since Harry and I were boys together, my life has been a blighted one. He, the eldest born, seemed ever to be the favored one; in good looks he carried off the palm, at school he carried off the prizes. My nature became soured at this. We grew up, and the same ill luck pursued me. You came to stay with us. When first I saw you, grown from a girl to womanhood, a something whispered in my heart that you alone could save me, and change my very nature. I loved you from that hour, but I dared not tell you so—you seemed too far away from me, too great, too good. While I kept silent, another spoke of love—Harry won your heart.

LAURA. Let me go, Reginald. Why give yourself and me this pain? What is past is past.

REG. But may it not be changed in the future? Will you wear out your young life thus? Laura, let me but hope, let me but think that I may one day win your love.

LAURA. Never, Reginald. Oh! why do you make this appeal to me, when you must guess my answer ere you ask the question?

REG. You refuse to give me hope? Take care, Laura, with such natures as mine, prone to strong impulses, a fellow soon runs off the rail. You could save me, and change all that is hard and sour to its opposite. If not love, will not pity move you. (*He sinks in chair, and buries his face in his hands.*)

LAURA. Reginald, if not Harry's wife, my heart is widowed to his love. Yes, I do pity you. The hand you grasped so tightly awhile ago, I offer you in friendship—as a sister—and I will save you, will help to awaken a better nature in you.

REG. Oh! Laura, with you for my guiding star, what great things I might have done.

LAURA. And will do yet. Now leave me for awhile. Return again composed, with happier thoughts, and say to me, "I have won the battle and conquered myself." Now go. Remember, this must be a happy evening—for your mother's sake.

REG. You see how I obey. (*Exit L.*)

LAURA. (*After a moment's pause.*) For months I have felt that this would one day happen. It has come, and thank heaven it is over. Reginald will now rise superior to this weakness, and become a noble fellow yet. (*She goes to the fireplace, leans on the chimney-piece, and looks at herself in the glass.*) Bella is right. The glass does not flatter. These eyes have lost their brightness, the face itself is changed. Harry would scarcely know me now.

*Enter MRS. BLANDFORD, L., leaning on BELLA's arm, who conducts her slowly to the easy chair beside the fire.*

BELLA. Here is mamma.

LAURA. Let me place this pillow for you. (*Arranging pillows.*)

MRS. B. How kind you all are to me. (*Sitting in chair.*)

BELLA. We won't take any credit to ourselves for doing our duty, dear mamma.

MRS. B. Ah! but it is the way you do that duty, so gently, so kindly. Where is Reginald?

LAURA. He left only a few minutes ago.

BELLA. I heard the street door close just now, he must have gone out. We have made the room so gay and pretty, mamma dear. I wish you could see it.

MRS. B. I do see it all, in imagination, just as I see your faces. My blindness is the least of my misfortunes. I hear your voices, I feel the pressure of your hands, and kisses on my cheeks, and in all these things I forget that I am blind.

BELLA. Now you must not talk like that. We are going to have a lively, merry evening. Laura shall read some Christmas story, and I will invent some fairy tale—the old ones we all know by heart. We will have some music first. Shall I sing to you, mamma?

MRS. B. Yes, darling.

LAURA. Shall I play for you?

BELLA. Yes, do please. I always sing so much better when you accompany me. (*LAURA and BELLA go to the piano, L.*) Now, shall it be grave or gay? A scene from an opera, or a simple ballad? It is all the same to me—no choice? Well then I will sing the first song I take haphazard from this folio—if I can. (*She draws a piece of music from the folio, looks at the title page and pauses.*)

LAURA. (*Seated at the piano.*) Well, I am ready.

BELLA. (*Low to LAURA.*) No! no! not that.

LAURA. (*Low to BELLA.*) What is it? (*BELLA shows the title-page.*) "He will Return." (*To herself.*) Is this mere chance, or is it some warning voice?

MRS. B. Now, Bella, are you going to begin?

BELLA. (*Exchanging glances with LAURA.*) Well, mamma, I said I would sing the first piece of music which came to my hand, if I could, and I find now it was a vain boast. So now I shall not sing at all.

MRS. B. Ah! capricious girl.

*LAURA and BELLA return to the fireside.*

BELLA. We will suppose the overture to be over. Now, for a fairy tale, or a ghost story. You tell one first, Laura, while I think of one to follow.

LAURA. What an attentive listener you will be. "Once upon a time,"—

BELLA. Stop, that is the way I begin.

LAURA. They all commence like that.

BELLA. Then mine shall not. I will be original.

LAURA. "Once upon a time."

BELLA. You said that before.

LAURA. Yes, but you interrupted me. "Once upon a time,"—

BELLA. Let me go on. "There was a king."—

LAURA. That's not original. All fairy tales begin like that.

BELLA. Well, but mine is not to be a fairy tale. I have changed my mind. I shall call my narrative a fireside story, chapter the first. "There was once a king who managed his kingdom so badly his subjects rebelled, and a revolution took place. His majesty had to ske-daddle——"

MRS. B. What?

BELLA. Cut—run away. Really, if I am to be interrupted in this way the flow of my imagination will be sadly checked. Where was I? Oh! his majesty bolted, and in such a hurry that he forgot to put the crown jewels in his pockets. He was a surly, selfish, old fellow, this king, and in his hurry to save himself, he left his only son behind him. Years went by, the son grew up to be a man; he had wandered here, there, and everywhere. Fortune seemed to have fallen in love with him—he was a handsome young man. Everything he touched turned to gold. Having made his fortune, and got a clue as to his father's whereabouts, he set off to find him. He arrived at a neat dwelling house, and knocked at the door—(*A knock heard at the street door.*) What is that?

LAURA. Reginald come back, most probably.

BELLA. Well, he knocked at the door, and asked if Mr. King was home?—that was the name the old gentleman had assumed—he was a clever old fellow that. The servant—he kept one you see; oh, he was pretty well off, he had not forgotten to bring away some of his money—the servant, of course, asked the gentleman his name, when he replied——

*Enter SERVANT, L.*

SERVANT. A stranger——

BELLA. Why, that is just what I was going to say.

MRS. B. A stranger?

SERVANT. Yes, ma'am, he asked first for Mr. Reginald, then hearing he was out, he asked who was at home. His business, he says, is important.

MRS. B. Where is he?

SERVANT. On the door mat, ma'am, in the hall.

MRS. B. Show him into the dining room. (*Exit SERVANT, L.*)

LAURA. Shall I go to him, aunty?

MRS. B. Will you be so good? (*Exit LAURA, L.*)

BELLA. I wonder who he is, and what he is like. Did it not come curiously *à propos*? I shall finish my story when he is gone. What can his business be?

MRS. B. You are full of curiosity, Bella. Patience, my child, we shall know all in time.

BELLA. Oh! but I want to know all directly. Why didn't you let him come up stairs at once.

MRS. B. A stranger——

BELLA. So romantic—so mysterious—(*Going to the piano, and playing during the following speech.*) A stranger—he ought to wear a large dark cloak, a slouch hat, high boots, and he should have a thick beard and large moustache, and he ought to enter to slow music. (*She plays "Home Sweet Home."*) *After some portion of the air has been played, the door L. opens, and LAURA enters, followed by the stranger—he wears a travelling cloak, beard, and moustache.*

LAURA. This is Mrs. Blandford, sir. (*Aside.*) Be cautious, she is weak and ailing.

STRANGER. Is that Mrs. Blandford? (*BELLA quits the piano and comes forward.*) And this is—

LAURA. Miss Blandford, sir, Cousin Bella. (*Going to Mrs. B., while BELLA and the STRANGER regard each other with embarrassment.*) Aunt, I have brought a gentleman to see you. He brings important news from Ceylon?

MRS. B. From Ceylon?

LAURA. Calm yourself, dear aunt. May he speak with you?

MRS. B. Oh, yes; bring him here beside me, close beside me. (*LAURA makes a sign and the STRANGER takes a chair next to Mrs. BLANDFORD.*)

LAURA. (*Aside to STRANGER.*) Pray be careful. (*Aloud.*) He is here, aunt.

MRS. B. You bring news from Ceylon. Of my son, I am sure. Oh! tell me is he alive? Is he well? Do not torture me. Suspense is dreadful. I have already suffered so much.

STRANGER. Your son lives.

MRS. B. Thank heaven for that.

BELLA. Dear brother Harry!

STRANGER. He lives, and is on his homeward journey. He requested me, his bosom friend, on my arrival at his home, to call on you, and break the news, so that it might not come too suddenly upon you.

MRS. B. My boy, my darling boy.

BELLA. But why have we never heard from him all these years?

STRANGER. It is a long story he will have to tell when he returns. I can only give you the outline. On his arrival at Ceylon, I think he wrote to you?

MRS. B. He did. It was the only letter we ever received from him.

STRANGER. Treachery—base, black, and cruel treachery—was set on foot to prevent all intercourse. The estate was prosperous, flourishing: your son soon saw this. On inspection of the books, he found all the returns had been falsified. Instead of bringing the villain before a tribunal, where he would have met with a just punishment, your son gave him a few days' notice to quit. Mistaken clemency. When the day arrived for the agent's departure, he requested to see your son in his office. Scarcely had he entered, when two hirelings, in this villain's pay, rushed on him, and pinioned him. The word was given to convey him to a room barricaded like a prison. Here for years he lingered on, until the sudden death of the principal of the foul outrage, and the repentance of one of the participants released him.

MRS. B. Oh! horror! My poor boy.

BELLA. The wicked wretches!

MRS. B. And he is coming home? When may we expect him?

STRANGER. Soon—very soon. You are sure you have the strength to bear this meeting when he comes?

MRS. B. Oh, yes.

STRANGER. When he takes your hand, as I do now; when he kneels at your feet and looks into that face; when he utters the word mother—

MRS. B. What is this? Your hand trembles as it grasps mine—your voice falters. It is you who are weak, I am strong.

STRANGER. Mother, it is Harry who speaks to you, who clasps you in his arms once more.

MRS. B. Oh! my son, my darling boy.

BELLA. Harry, my brother Harry. (*About to go to him.*)

LAURA. Hush! One moment I beg. (*MRS. B. and HARRY embrace.*)

LAURA and BELLA *grouping themselves on either side and pause.* Enter REGINALD, L.

BELLA. Oh, Reginald, such news. (*She runs to meet him and turns him round so that he has his back to HARRY.*) Who do you think has come home? You'll never guess. Harry—and there he is. (*Turns him round.*)

REGINALD. Harry!

HARRY. (*Coming towards him.*) Reginald?

BELLA. (*Coming between them.*) Oh, stop, stop. I have not had my recognition yet. (*She kisses HARRY several times.*) Then there is Laura. (*LAURA turns away, BELLA goes to her.*) Ah, you sly one, that is all over is it?

HARRY. By and by, Reginald, you shall hear all I have to tell. (*Going to MRS. B., and sitting down again by her side.*)

REGINALD. (*Low to LAURA.*) Laura, you were right—a new life begins to dawn upon me.

BELLA. (*At the fire-place.*) Come, Laura, sit next to Harry, and you, Reginald between us. (*They take their seats as directed.*) What a family party, and what a happy Christmas Eve. Now, shall I go on with my tale? No! It is ended. I shall add Harry's adventures to what I had begun to relate, and then, many a time to come, I shall hope to tell my Fireside Story.

CURTAIN.

## A CLOUD IN THE HONEYMOON.

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### CHARACTERS.

THEMISTOCLES TWIDDLE.

SUSANNA TWIDDLE, his wife.

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SCENE—*A simply furnished Room. Door, R. Screen, L., supposed to hide a Door. A Window, in flat, c. A small Round Table, with Candlestick, etc., R. C.; Chairs, etc.*

*Enter TWIDDLE, R., with an umbrella under his arm.*

TWIDDLE. Nonsense, Twiddle! you are a fool, sir! Think the matter over deliberately and maturely, Twiddle, as becomes a man and a teacher. It is scarcely a month since you married a charming little woman, who has lived in the genteelest society, and travelled abroad with very distinguished people, as companion. At half-past seven this morning you leave her in the arms of Morpheus—greatly envying that rascal Morpheus—and go to knock Latin into the little boys' heads, by the application of a cane, in a situation precisely the reverse. You return a little earlier than usual to breakfast—that same application having been uncommonly expeditiously applied; and as you approach your house you see, or you fancy you see, a hat with pink feather, and an ulster, and a smart figure, which your arm has encircled in moments of honeymoon affection, and a foot and ankle, which has caused you many a sigh when you were a bachelor, all tripping along the street quietly, stealthily, close to the wall, as if afraid of observation. A queer feeling—a sort of no-how-ish-ness—runs all up and down your back; you turn and follow. The aforesaid feather, ulster, figure, and foot and ankle disappear round the corner; you mizzle round the same: and the vision is gone! But was it a vision? Were your senses deluded, Twiddle? Or was it in truth the partner of your bosom, who should be at home making your toast, Twiddle? That's what you ask yourself. Fie! Twiddle, fie! for shame, sir. Are there not other pink feathers in the world and other ulsters, and other smart figures and other feet and ankles which cause you to sigh? No! I don't mean that! but are you not a consummate fool, sir, to suppose that the aforesaid partner of your bosom could be running out at early hours of the morning in a secret and clandestine manner when the aforesaid partner of your bosom is certainly employed in making toast for your breakfast there? (*Opens door, R.*) No; she isn't. Then, she assuredly is in the arms of Mor-

pheus, or doing up her back hair in the bedroom. (*Peeps behind screen.*) No; she isn't. Then, without the shadow of a doubt, she is in the house somewhere. Remember, Twiddle, remember, that being naturally of a jealous temperament, you swore, when you married, upon the still smouldering ashes of your bachelorship to abjure that failing, and to have implicit trust and confidence in the partner of your bosom, even should your own eyes—

*Enter MRS. TWIDDLE, hastily, R. D., dressed precisely as described by TWIDDLE.*

MRS. T. Home again!

TWID. (*Turning.*) Eh?

MRS. T. (*Seeing him.*) Ah!

TWID. Oh! you have been out, it seems.

MRS. T. Of course, since you see I have come in.

TWID. The very same pink feather, the very same ulster, the very same foot and ankle.

MRS. T. What's that you say?

TWID. Just look the other way, my love.

MRS. T. (*Going up to take off her ulster.*) What do you mean?

TWID. And the very same et cetera.

MRS. T. Are you long home from the School?

TWID. Just this moment returned? (*Sitting down, aside.*) The no-how-ishness is running all up and down my back again.

MRS. T. (*Occupied at back.*) Your breakfast shall be ready directly, ducky.

TWID. (*Preoccupied.*) The same pink feather, and the same et cetera.

MRS. T. I've got some watercresses for you; I know you like a little green—

TWID. (*Starting from his reverie.*) Who's a little green? What's a little green?

MRS. T. (*Laughing.*) Why! what are you dreaming about?

TWID. (*Rising.*) Nothing—a mere colorless nothing (*aside.*) What the deuce does she mean by a little green? (*Taking her hand solemnly, with the rhythm of the well-known song,*) “O, Susanna.” (*Changing tone.*) I'm not in the slightest degree curious; but I *should* like to know what you went out this morning for, when baker, grocer, and milkman bring all the necessaries of life to the door.

MRS. T. Oh, there are a thousand and one things a young house-keeper is forced to buy herself.

TWID. Now, as I said before, I am *not* curious; but I *should* like to know the one of the one thousand and one you have been buying this morning.

MRS. T. Oh! I just went out for some needles I want to use.

TWID. Which way?

MRS. T. (*Laughing.*) The usual one, by putting the thread at one end and sewing with the other.

TWID. Which way did you go?

MRS. T. (Oh, I—(*with more constrained laughing.*) Why, one would think you were examining your boys.

TWID. The fact is I thought I saw your pink feather, et cetera, going—

MRS. T. Where? (*aside.*) Can he suspect?

TWID. Down the next street.

MRS. T. That's the way to my fancy store.

TWID. Which, if I remember, lies in the opposite direction.

MRS. T. Oh! One takes the longest way sometimes, for a little air.

TWID. (*Aside.*) A little air! that's an empty reason. (*Aloud.*) Show me your needles, my love.

MRS. T. (*Embarrassed.*) My needles! Oh! I couldn't exactly get my number.

TWID. You wanted a great quantity, then?

MRS. T. I mean my size.

TWID. (*Solemnly.*) "O Susanna!" (*She looks at him, he is embarrassed and coughs.*) Hem! Hem!

MRS. T. Well?

TWID. (*Quickly changing his tone.*) I don't like your going out in that way, ma'am.

MRS. T. What do you mean?

TWID. (*Embarrassed.*) In fact—in short; I don't think it at all proper that a charming young female, with such a foot and ankle, and such an—et cetera, should be in the street alone.

MRS. T. Now be reasonable, Themistocles. You know that we are forced to be economical. We can't afford to keep a servant. You are obliged to be out almost all day.

TWID. Alas! as Virgil says, you remind me of my misfortune.

MRS. T. Then we must conform ourselves, like a good little new-married couple, to our limited means. I am sure I try to be as economical as I can; and you know how I complain of your extravagances for me, all because you love me so well. You are always wanting to get something for your dear little Susanna, you naughty man; and yet you deprive yourself of all your bachelor luxuries.

TWID. Because I think it just, Mrs. T.; and I only wish I had had any little faulty excesses, in which bachelor gents are wont to indulge, in order that I might have laid the sacrifice of them at your pretty feet—to say nothing of the ankles. But I had none: I was never given to the indulgence of sherry cobblers, nor of gin slings, nor of tobaccos. I never touched a cigar in my life, and if there's anything I hate, it's a cigar. Oh! pah! a cigar: I execrate a cigar. The very thought of a cigar gives me a no-how-ish-ness.

MRS. T. (*Caressingly patting his cheeks.*) Well, then, my Themistocles shall have his other little indulgences; a sweetbread for dinner sometimes, with crumbs, eh? and the family circle at the theatre; a good cry at a domestic drama, now and then, hey? (*As if talking to a child*): There's a goody, goody, goody.

TWID. (*Completely mollified, aside.*) Now, I can't stand the "Goody, goody, goody." Twiddle, I repeat it, you were a consummate fool to have had the slightest suspicion.

MRS. T. (*Who has gone up to set out a table.*) And it shall have its breakfast directly, if it's a good boy; and I'll get its toast ready, nicely browned, as it likes it, and a good cup of tea; and I'll be its only servant to wait on it. There!

TWID. (*Enchanted.*) And I'll pay the wages. There! (*Kisses her.*)

MRS. Naughtly, naughty, be quiet!

TWID. (*Still holding her, aside.*) I renew my conviction that Twiddle was a fool,

MRS. T. (*Aside.*) Thank goodness, he suspects nothing.

TWID. That's what I call nice.

MRS. T. To be so happy together.

TWID. All alone.

MRS. T. Without any one to watch and spy.

TWID. (*Letting her go with sudden suspicion again.*) Hey! What did you say?

MRS. T. Without any one to prevent our being as gay as crickets.

TWID. (*Approaching again.*) Oh!

MRS. T. And having a little private polka or schottische to amuse ourselves sometimes.

TWID. (*Encircling her waist again.*) Yes. Getting up a little domestic Casino of our own; for I have never indulged in any other, Mrs. T.

MRS. T. (*Humming a polka or schottische.*) Yes; so, la, la, la!

TWID. (*Humming and dancing.*) La, la, la.

MRS. T. (*Dancing.*) That's it. La, la, la!

TWID. (*Dancing.*) La, la, la!

MRS. T. (*As before.*) Oh, Themistocles, I wish—La, la, la!

TWID. (*As before.*) What, my dear? La, la, la!

MRS. T. You had some little fault—la, la, la!

TWID. A fault, why? La, la, la!

MRS. T. Because—La, la, la!

TWID. Because? La, la, la!

MRS. T. I'll tell you another time. (*Stopping out of breath.*) Only, I can't stir another step. I'm choking. (*Falls back in his arms.*)

TWID. Hand round the refreshments. (*Kisses her.*)

MRS. T. (*Springing up.*) We can manage to keep ourselves happy, you see.

TWID. Oh, yes.

MRS. T. In mutual affection.

TWID. And mutual confidence. (*Looking sharply at her.*) Never having any secrets one from the other, hey? Never!

MRS. T. (*Turning the conversation.*) Hush! I think the kettle's boiling over.

TWID. I'll go and put on my dressing gown to be all comfortable.

MRS. T. Do, deary.

TWID. Adoo, ducky.

*Exit TWID., R., behind screen, taking hat and umbrella with him.*

MRS. T. (*Going L., stops.*) No secrets one from the other! Poor dear hubby, if he knew that I kept a secret from him—an awful secret! To think now that he might have followed me—seen me go into—oh, the very thought gives me the shivers all over. To say the truth, a secret passion is a frightful thing, when, do what you will, you can't root it out. Ah! men are happy creatures; they can do what they like; but they never allow us poor women, any little amusements. Oh, if Themistocles knew that, when he is absent all day, I had a faithful friend to brighten my dull hours of solitude, wouldn't he be in a boiling rage? (*Listening.*) Now, though, it is the kettle. (*Runs hastily into door, R.*)

*At the moment she goes out TWID. rushes in, L., pale and in a state of great agitation.*

TWID. (*Sniffing.*) There's no doubt! it's smoke! tobacco smoke! frightful tobacco smoke! A man has been here! a wretched male being has been blowing a cloud in our nuptial apartment. Horror! a cloud—and in our honeymoon too—a cloud of tobacco smoke. Pah! I'm half-choked with rage, and t'other thing. A man, a smoker! who can he be? Ah! I recollect. I've several times seen a big-whiskered and frightfully moustached individual prowling about the house, always smoking a cigar—and a big one too—Oh! wasn't it a big one? Horror! And when I looked at him, so, (*Puts on a comical air of indignation,*) he laughed in my face; he positively laughed in my face—I ask any unprejudiced person if there is anything to laugh at in my face—and walked off, the sneak. It must have been this wretched being with the whiskers and the very big cigar. He's always about here, near the house. O, Susanna! to think that you—with your sweet caressing voice, and your “goody, goody, goody,” could be so deceitful, receive a man in secret, with a very big cigar, who turns our nuptial apartment into a filthy pothouse. Pah! Oh Susanna: could I have thought it of you? (*Almost crying,*) you, who call me ducky and you fancied I could see nothing; but you forgot that I could smell. Yes, unhappy woman, if Twiddle has no eyes, he's got a nose, and a good one, too. If I catch him---him and his big cigar---I'll give it to him. So, and so, and so! (*As he speaks TWID. kicks chairs and table, and upsets all the furniture.*)

*Enter MRS. T., with breakfast on tray.*

MRS. T. Good gracious! What are you up to?

TWID. Mrs. T. (*Picks up the chairs, &c., ashamed.*)

MRS. T. If that's the way you help me in my domestic arrangements—

TWID. There seem to be some domestic arrangements in which you consider my help unnecessary, Mrs. T.

MRS. T. Why, bless us, what ails the man? (*She is arranging the breakfast at the table.*)

TWID. (*Aside.*) Command yourself, Twiddle! The hour of vengeance is not yet come! (*Aloud!*) What ails me? Hunger ails me---thirsts ails me---everything ails me. (*Aside.*) My calm is wonderful.

MRS. T. (*at table.*) I never knew you so impatient before. One would think you were in a hurry to go. Now, come! breakfast is ready.

TWID. (*Sulkily.*) Thank ye; don't want any; aint hungry.

MRS. T. (*Cajoling.*) What! is it out of temper now, because it has been waiting? Come! (*Looking at him.*) Good gracious! What's the matter with you? You are all yellow and green.

TWID. Shouldn't wonder—green in the eye.

MRS. T. What is it, tell me, Themistocles? Misty, Misty!

TWID. Yes, Madam, it is misty, confoundedly misty, and cloudy too.

MRS. T. It's very often so, hereabouts.

TWID. It is, is it? (*Ferociously.*) Oh Susanna!

MRS. T. You alarm me; I don't understand.

TWID. (*As before.*) You don't understand? (*Changing tone and manner.*) Pour me out my tea.

MRS. T. (*Bursting out laughing.*) Ha! ha! ha! how droll you are.

TWID. (*Laughing also, fiendishly.*) Ha! ha! ha! So, I'm droll. You think so? (*Sits at table.*)

MRS. T. Come, eat your breakfast.

TWID. (*Aside.*) I will; I'll dissemble; I'll eat like an ogre.

MRS. T. (*Pouring out tea.*) You like it strong?

TWID. (*Aside.*) You seem to draw it pretty strong, Mrs. T., certainly. (*Smelling.*) I can smell the monster's odor here.

MRS. T. Well?

TWID. (*Still aside.*) Yes; that's it. Fee-fo-fum. I smell—

MRS. T. (*Louder waiting.*) Well?

TWID. (*Starting and shouting.*) What?

MRS. T. Louder.) I asked whether you liked it strong?

TWID. (*As before.*) Well, and I answered, you seem to draw it. No, not that. (*She stops.*) Strong; yes. (*She pours out.*) No, no!

MRS. T. You should make up your mind. There it is now. (*Gives cup.*) And I hope it will make you a little more loveable.

TWID. Oh Susanna! Then, you don't think me loveable? (*Almost crying.*) Perhaps you have seen some one (*aside*) with moustaches (*aloud*) somewhere in the world (*aside*) just before the door (*aloud*) more to your mind than me (*aside*) with a very big cigar.

MRS. T. What folly!

TWID. (*Getting pathetic.*) Tell me, then, oh tell me, that you love no one—no one at all, in the least, but your own Themistocles, your Misty, your ducky, your "goody, goody, goody." You don't, do you? (*Takes hold of her hand pulling her slightly towards him.*)

MRS. T. There's an idea to get into your head, Themistocles! I hope you are not jealous.

TWID. Jealous! I. Oh, no, no, no, never. You know that is a defect I don't possess.

MRS. T. No nor any other. (*Aside.*) I wish you did.

TWID. Oh Susanna. (*He has been holding and fondling her hand, goes to kiss it, and starts back with a loud cry.*) Ha!

MRS. T. (*Starting.*) What's the matter again, now?

TWID. (*Aside, jumping up.*) Her very dress smells of the horrid tobacco smoke. (*Aloud.*) Mrs. T.: There are in the world creatures—monsters of iniquity—degraded beings, who commit excesses, criminal excesses, and smoke cigars, Mrs. T. (*Aside.*) She's confused. (*Aloud.*) I speak of smoking, as I should speak of anything else, Mrs. T., because I hate it, and because I have sworn that lips lied by Cheroots or Cubas should never approach yours, Mrs. T. (*Aside.*) She starts! She colors. Twiddle, you're a lost man! Lips sullied by Cheroots and Cubas have—(*staggers back.*) Oh!

MRS. T. (*Confused.*) Now, Themistocles, you know I love you dearly, but if I had a partiality for—I say, if I had.

TWID. If! madam? My convictions go beyond those two very uncomfortable letters of the alphabet.

MRS. T. Well, then—

TWID. (*Aside, overwhelmed.*) Now it's coming. Twiddle, be firm!

MRS. T. (*With hesitation.*) I have!

TWID. (*Starting back.*) Oh!

MRS. T. But, I can't help it; indeed, I can't; it's too strong for me to resist.

TWID. Wretched woman!

MRS. T. But, you'll pardon me: I'm sure you will.

TWID. I! pardon you! (*Laughing wildly.*) Ha! ha! ha! (*Changing tone.*) Never!

MRS. T. After all it's only a fancy.

TWID. Oh, you call it a fancy, do you? Oh, sophistry of women!

MRS. T. And you are all the day at the school; and when I'm all alone I want some object to console me; and then I dream 'tis you are by my side.

TWID. Well! that I admit is a fancy! Horrible idea!

MRS. T. There! don't put yourself in a passion.

TWID. I'll trample the object to dust beneath my indignant feet.

MRS. T. Ah! but I'll hide the object out of sight.

TWID. But my outraged feelings will discover the object, and fling the object out of the window. (*Seizing her arm.*) And you too, Madam, and you, too.

MRS. T. Gracious! you hurt me.

TWID. And I'll send for your mother, your poor old virtuous mother; and I'll say to her with dignity: "Take back your daughter, I'll have nothing more to say to her." There! (*Strikes an attitude.*)

MRS. T. 'Tis abominable! You men think you are to have all the little pleasures of life to yourselves, and never permit poor women the least comfort and consolation in your absence. But 'tis enough to make a revolution. You are nothing but tyrants, and we'll emancipate ourselves in spite of you. That we will! (*Exit L.*)

TWID. She'll emancipate herself! Mysterious and awful word! She'll—Oh! 'tis enough to drive one mad! And she puts on an air of innocent simplicity, and avows her partiality, as if there was no harm in it, and calls me a tyrant, when I'm choking with jealousy and rage; and she swears she'll—Oh! but I'll discover her wretched accomplice. I'll watch him—his big cigar and all—and then I'll surprise him—his big cigar and all—and he shall find I've smoked him—his big cigar and all. But how—when—what—where? (*Looks around as if for the means of concealment.*)

*Enter Mrs. T., L., with TWID.'s hat and umbrella.*

MRS. T. Come, if you are very good, I'll forgive and forget.

TWID. She says she'll—she! she!

MRS. T. Come, here's your hat and your umbrella.

TWID. (*With a sombre manner.*) What for?

MRS. T. What do you mean, what for? Isn't it time for you to go back to the school? You know you must be punctual.

TWID. Yes, yes. (*Aside.*) She's regularly turning me out of the house.

MRS. T. And you might lose your place. Think! the only means we have to depend upon. (*Cajoling him.*) Come, come! it musn't look so cross at its Susanna.

TWID. (*Aside.*) She's trying on the goodies again. Cockatrice!

MRS. T. Come, kiss and make up. What! is it sulky? Come, that's a defect at last, and I am glad to find that you have one too. Now, come! be a goody, goody, goody. (*Kisses him.*)

TWID. (*Aside.*) There, I said so! serpent!

MRS. T. But now you must be off as quickly as you can.

TWID. (*Aside.*) 'Tis clear, she wants to get rid of me.

MRS. T. What do you say?

TWID. I say, I say that—that I'm going—it is the hour. (*Aside.*)

Yes, evidently the hour she expects the horrid fellow with his moustaches, and, all the rest. But, I won't go far—

MRS. T. (*Offering his hat, which she has been brushing after putting the umbrella by the window.*) Now, go. Here are your gloves, too. (*Gives them.*) Don't be too late for dinner. And mind, when you come back, knock hard, for I may be occupied.

TWID. Ah, you wish to be aware that I—

MRS. T. Of course. What does the man mean?

TWID. (*Solemnly.*) Oh Susanna. (*Takes her hand, then changing his mind, flings it from him.*) Good bye. (*Exit rapidly, R. D.*)

MRS. T. It is very evident he has some notion of the truth. I was so confused I scarcely dared look him in the face. What with his fancies and suspicions, and questionings and delays, I thought he'd never go; and I never longed more to be alone and indulge in my little weakness. But now I'm free! I'll take care not to be caught in the act though. (*She locks the door R.*) Come forth little companion of my solitude. (*Looks around her.*) Come, my friend, and solace my lonely hours. Come, fellow-accomplice, come! (*She puts her hand in her pocket and pulls out a cigar, which she holds up in triumph.*) Ah! there you are, my treasure, my beauty! How can anybody call my little darling nasty? Now to profit by my solitude to enjoy it. (*Looking round for a match.*) Where are the matches? (*finds them.*) Ah! I tremble still, for when I think that my husband has sworn to throw us both out of the window. Ah, bah! I'll risk it. (*Lights a candle and then the cigar.*) That's it; it's alight: how nice! (*Puffs. A knocking at the door.*) Oh! what's that? Somebody knocks. (*Knocking again.*) Who's there? (*She trembles with agitation.*)

TWID. (*Without.*) 'Tis I.

MRS. T. Ah, my husband! (*Puts away the candle without extinguishing it.*)

TWID. (*Knocking.*) Open the door! open the door!

MRS. T. (*Trying to extinguish the cigar.*) I'm coming, I'm coming. (*Aside.*) Oh! where shall I hide it? what shall I do?

TWID. Why don't you open the door, Mrs. T.?

MRS. T. Coming. (*Putting her cigar in her pocket.*) 'Tis still alight; I shall certainly blow myself up. Well, that's better than being blown up by him.

TWID. (*Knocking louder.*) What the devil are you up to, Mrs. T.?

MRS. T. (*Going up to open the door.*) Well! well! don't be so impatient.

TWID. (*Rushing in with disturbed mien.*) You've been a deuced long time with your "coming," Mrs. T. You don't seem to know exactly the meaning of the word, Mrs. T. (*Looking around him with suspicion.*)

MRS. T. What, what are you looking for?

TWID. (*With an expression of rage.*) Looking for! She asks me what I am looking for. (*With a change of tone ironically.*) My umbrella, deary, which I left behind. (*With a sudden exclamation.*) Ah, in that room, that room! (*Crosses and enters precipitately the room behind the screen.*)

MRS. T. (*Laughing.*) Oh, only his umbrella!

TWID. (*Re-entering, aside.*) Not there! Yet I saw the fellow go round the corner, big cigar and all. He can only have come in here, big cigar and all (*smelling;*) and, as I said before, it is a decided case of Fee—fo—fum,

MRS. T. (*Laughing.*) Now, if you would trouble yourself to look round, you might find—

TWID. Find! where?

MRS. T. There!

TWID. (*Twisting round.*) Where, there?

MRS. T. By the window.

TWID. (*Turning suddenly.*) By the window! ah, yes, my umbrella.

MRS. T. Didn't you say, your umbrella?

TWID. Yes, to be sure; I want it when clouds are coming up in this way. (*Snuffing.*) There's sure to be a storm. (*Turns and sees MRS. T. occupied in putting to rights, and quickly undoes the hasp of the window.*)

MRS. T. That's why you are so nervous and agitated, I suppose.

TWID. Nervous; yes, my nerves are all of a quiver. They can't abide clouds, Mrs. T. (*Aside, brandishing his umbrella.*) And won't there be a storm.

MRS. T. (*Occupied, without looking at him.*) You'll be too late for the school hour.

TWID. We'll I'm going; I'm going; you see I'm going. (*Does not stir but still continues looking around under table and chairs, &c.*)

MRS. T. You call that going, do you?

TWID. (*Ashamed to be caught brandishing his umbrella, with dignity.*) Mrs. T.: I know how to decline the verb "go" without your teaching; and I decline also any interference in my grammatical functions. (*Going, aside.*) Oh, won't there be a storm! (*Brandishes umbrella, then turns, regards MRS. T. with severe dignity, and exit, c.*)

MRS. T. (*Watches him out, locks the door c. again, and then proceeds to re-light her cigar, talking and singing all the while.*) Ah! how he frightened me with his umbrella. What did he want to come and disturb me at the critical moment for? (*Smoking.*) Oh! how good it is! That is true enjoyment! (*Throws herself into an arm-chair.*) How the smoke mounts, mounts in the air in pretty little spirals. (*Smelling.*) It's a regular nosegay! Ah, with eyes half-closed, gazing through a film at the cloud of smoke, I feel wafted upwards towards the sky along with it, and dream such pleasant dreams, in the midst of which looms forth the face of my husband, calm, serene, beautiful in expression. (*As she speaks the window is opened softly and the head of TWIDDLE appears from without making a horrible grimace.*) Ah! I could dream on thus for hours! What a short-lived pleasure it is after all! And they grumble at it.

TWID. (*Getting in at the window.*) The storm is coming down upon their heads. (*Half-choking.*) Oh, pah, there's that horrible Fe—fo—fum again! It half chokes me. Oh. (*Begins to cough, spite his efforts to restrain himself, stumbles in by the window, and lets fall his umbrella.*)

MRS. T. (*Alarmed at the noise.*) Ah! (*Turns, sees TWIDDLE, jumps up hastily and springs towards the screen, with a scream.*)

TWID. (*Getting up.*) Oh Susanna!

MRS. T. (*Hiding her cigar behind her.*) Themistocles!

TWID. Yes, madam, your Themistocles, your injured Themistocles, (*Rubs his legs.*) Your Misty, who means to clear up, your horrible doings, madam!

MRS. T. (*Trembling.*) How can you frighten one so, coming in at the window in that way?

TWID. Oh, yes, it's abominable, I dare say, madam! It gives you no warning, madam—leaves the wretch no time to escape, madam.

MRS. T. What wretch?

TWID. The infamous villain whom you receive in my absence, madam.

MRS. T. I?

TWID. Where is he?           Mrs. T. Who?

TWID. (*Shouting.*) He!

MRS. T. Who?

TWID. (*With indignation.*) Madam, the reiteration of those evasive forms of interrogation won't serve your turn. (*Solemnly.*) You see that I know all.

MRS. T. All what?

TWID. Another note of interrogation! (*With reproach.*) Oh Susanna! (*Shouting again.*) The whole place stinks of tobacco smoke.

MRS. T. Well, now you say so, I fancy—perhaps there may be a slight odor—of some kind of smoke.

TWID. Shade of Mrs Bouncer! She'll want to persuade me next it is the chimney. (*Advancing upon her.*) Oh Susanna! (*Seizing her right hand, which she holds behind her.*) Oh Susanna! (*Screaming.*) O! I've burned my fingers.

MRS. T. I thought you would, going on in that way.

TWID. You thought I would. What have you got? (*Seizing her hand again and holding it up.*) What's that?

MRS. T. Now don't be angry.

TWID. A cigar?

MRS. T. Yes, I went to buy it this morning. I can't help it. It's a habit acquired when I travelled with a lady in Spain.

TWID. Oh! what doesn't one acquire in genteel society?

MRS. T. It's grown to be a passion, Twiddy; but it is my only one, except my love for you: an old habit I can't get rid of; but you said you had such a horror of smoking, that, that—

TWID. You smoke? Susanna smokes! I smoke too, now—ah!

MRS. T. (*Kneeling.*) Don't be angry. Themistocles, pardon me.

TWID. No, no, poor dear little wife: it is I who am to blame. I was a fool. Jealous! I fancied you received, in my absence, a smoker—a horrid fellow, with moustaches, and all the rest.

MRS. T. Jealous! Then you have a fault too.

TWID. I have; now don't be angry, Susanna, pardon me! (*Kneels down before her.*)

MRS. T. We'll pardon each other—there! (*They embrace on their knees.*) And, if you like, ducky, I'll try and not smoke any more.

TWID. No, no deary, I'll try and smoke with you.

MRS. T. (*Half-ashamed, pulling another cigar out of her pocket.*) Will you, though? There! (*Gives cigar.*)

TWID. Why, she keeps a Co-operative store! Oh Susanna! Well, give it here! (*He lights his cigar at hers; both still kneeling.*) How droll! I never could abide it; but, 'tisn't so bad.

MRS. T. You'll learn to find it very nice. Puff away!

TWID. I'm puffing! (*Smokes and begins to cough.*) Ough, ough!

MRS. T. It's nothing when you get used to it. And we'll always smoke together. And the clouds we blow shall be such pleasant ones, now that other horrid cloud is blown over.

TWID. What cloud?

MRS. T. The Cloud in the Honeymoon.

*They salute the audience, still on their knees, TWID. holding MRS. T. round the waist, both smoking.*

CURTAIN.

# LOVED AND LOST.

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## CHARACTERS.

HENRY ASTON.

HAROLD GWYNNE.

ELLEN MARSTON.

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SCENE.—*A well-furnished Apartment. Entrances R. and L. Window in flat.*

ELLEN *seated at work at table*; HAROLD *standing near.*

HAROLD. I have lived a very lonely, weary life, Ellen. I long for peace and quiet. Will you cruelly turn me out into the noisy, quarrelsome world again? Oh, I promise to love you sincerely and truly as long as I live. I will myself be your servant, and save you from the slightest trouble, if you will only give me the light of your presence. Do not deny me hastily, for my whole future depends on your answer.

ELLEN. I am very sorry for this. Very sorry, Harold, because I had hoped that you would ever be my best and truest friend, but I am afraid that I shall now be deserted by you.

HAROLD. What must you turn me away because I dreamed of a happiness so great as that of being your husband?

ELLEN. It cannot be. It cannot be. I am sorry that I cannot answer as you would wish, but it is not through selfishness or a disregard for your feelings: it is as much for your sake as for my own that I answer you—no.

HAROLD. Then it is mistaken kindness. Whether it is better, to remain for ever by your side, with the right to be there, or to go now heartbroken and cheerless into a desolate world? Oh! Ellen, some devil has tempted you to my disadvantage with a false conclusion. Let truth and love avert its influence. Tell me what were these whisperings, and I will prove that they are as false and hollow as their source.

ELLEN. Alas, Harold, my conclusion is founded on hard, stern fact—fact that I cannot forget while I have this bitter aching heart that continually reminds me of it. If I have to give you a cruel answer, it is in true kindness, and believe me I can pity you, for I have borne such a blow myself.

HAROLD. You?

ELLEN. Aye. I have loved—and this is my answer to you—I love another.

HAROLD. And you will marry him? I wish you joy.

ELLEN. Joy! The world is more black, and cheerless, and wearisome to me than, I pray, it will ever be to you. I love another, but

my love is lost—wasted : bestowed on one who has forgotten the gift.

HAROLD. The scoundrel—

ELLEN. Nay, I love him still.

HAROLD. Pardon me.

ELLEN. Oh, Harold, I would that you had loved some innocent girl that would have been like a sister to me as you have been like a brother. How dearly I would love her. You have seen me too frequently. If you travelled you might soon forget. New faces—

HAROLD. No, no ; my experience of the world was not acquired yesterday. My heart has made its choice—it is your decision that will either give it new life or make it desolate.

ELLEN. Have I not already decided ? Have I not told you I love another ?

HAROLD. But will your life be wasted for him ? Is he true ? Come, tell me your story. By renewing your memory, you will be best able to gauge the respective merits of your misplaced affection, and the true, honest love I offer you.

ELLEN. I am afraid it will not alter my mind. My story is very simple. When my father died, he left us in such poor circumstances, that I was obliged to take a situation as governess. Then by chance I made the acquaintance of a gentleman—

HAROLD. (*Aside.*) A scoundrel !

ELLEN. Who was on a visit. His name was Henry Aston. We frequently met. He won my love, and I consented to marry him. When he left, he said he would immediately get his father's consent to our marriage, and that his mother would come and see me. Instead of that, scarcely a week after he left I received a letter from his mother, to inform me that her son wished to have no further communication with me, and enclosed were two or three cuttings from local papers, which spoke of the contemplated match between Henry Aston, Esq., of Aston Towers, and the Lady Alicia—something—I forget what now. At all events, he never wrote to me, he never came to see me, and soon after I was peremptorily deprived of my situation, through, I have no doubt, the influence of his family, and turned adrift ; I have never seen or heard of him since. He is happy I suppose with his titled wife, and never thinks of me. Even if I had the opportunity, I am too proud to let him know I think of him.

HAROLD. And, because of this wretched piece of deception, are you going to waste all your life for such a heartless, worthless fellow ?

ELLEN. Because you are willing to spoil your future, is that any reason why I, who love you as a dear brother, should consent to help you ?

HAROLD. How ?

ELLEN. By marrying you when I do not love you.

HAROLD. You will learn in time to do so.

ELLEN. If I thought so I would consent, but I know I shall love Henry while I live. I care too sincerely for you to risk your happiness.

HAROLD. Honestly now, and putting all sentiment on one side, you never hope to marry this Aston ?

ELLEN. No. In fact I believe he is married.

HAROLD. Then you will never be aware of the death of the old passion till a new one is born. I am sure if you only rightly understood your heart, you would find you do not care for him at all. But you will surely awake to that fact some day, and then I shall be an

old man, grey-headed and broken down, not worth your slightest regard. Oh, Ellen, do not waste your life and mine on an altar of foolish sentimentalism. Soar above the promptings of a blighted heart, and listen to the dictates of your womanhood and good sense. Am I not a man you can trust?

ELLEN. With my life. I honor you, I respect you, I trust you—everything short of love.

HAROLD. Well then, I ask you earnestly and solemnly to become my wife, and I will require no more of you than your respect and confidence. I have too great a trust in you to fear that your mistaken love for this man will ever tempt you to wrong.

ELLEN. (*Tremulous.*) Oh! Harold, do not act rashly. If I consent, you will be responsible for my happiness.

HAROLD. I have no fear for that. You can ever trust me. Your love is dead, and that being gone, what higher feelings are there than respect and reverence? I have no fear for the future, and I am very hopeful, for interest, regard, and love are but steps. I believe in the golden time of peace that is coming.

ELLEN. May heaven grant it. (*They embrace.*) Leave me now, Harold, a little while. (*He kisses her fondly. Exit L.*)

ELLEN. Of his love there is no doubt; but oh! how different is the feeling with which I view my future now, to that—but away! I will not think such things; let me rather convince myself that fate has conspired to make me happy.

(*Enter HENRY, R. He looks bewildered.*)

If I cannot love my husband, at least I can respect him; I will be proud of him, and if ever I meet—*him*, I will try—. Yes, I think I could meet him now as if he were a stranger.

HENRY. Ellen!

ELLEN. Henry! (*She rushes into his arms, and then retires to extreme L.*)

HENRY. What is the meaning of this?

ELLEN. (*Agitated.*) I beg your pardon, Mr. Aston, for my extraordinary conduct; but if your memory is not surprisingly defective, let it remind you of what took place about three years ago,

HENRY. Nothing can account to me for your manner. Perhaps you will explain why you never wrote to me during those three years.

ELLEN. I did not think the Lady Alicia would approve of such a correspondent.

HENRY. The Lady Alicia be hanged. How did you get hold of that cock-and-a-bull story? But come, Nell, you owe me an explanation. You, my promised wife, ran away from the only address I knew, and left not a trace behind.

ELLEN. I did not leave, I was dismissed.

HENRY. Dismissed! Did you get my letter?

ELLEN. The only letter I got was from your mother.

HENRY. Ah! that beautiful epistle. But didn't you get my letter?

ELLEN. I only got your mother's. I did not think you would write when, as I understood from that letter, you were busy in preparations for your marriage.

HENRY. That you of course believed?

ELLEN. Yes.

HENRY. What, my marriage?

ELLEN. Yes, with the Lady Alicia.

HENRY. The Lady Fiddlesticks. How could you believe me so false?

ELLEN. And—and are you not married?

HENRY. Married! Married! Come, did you think I was?

ELLEN. Yes.

HENRY. Then that's the secret. And did the goosey run away because people chose to tell lies?

ELLEN. I did not rely solely on newspapers; I gave up all thoughts of you on receipt of this letter. (*Handing letter to him, which she takes from work-basket.*)

HENRY. From my mother. (*Reading.*) 'My son wishes me to inform you that his marriage with the Lady Alicia Fulsomehigh, which has long been in contemplation, and is entirely consonant to the wishes of his family, will shortly be solemnized. Under these circumstances, Madam, I trust you will see the propriety—for your own sake—of forgetting whatever he may have said to you when in your company.' Oh! mother, how could you be so wickedly cruel?

ELLEN. I did not answer this letter, but I trust your mother had no reason to complain of my obedience.

HENRY. Ellen, do not let us misunderstand each other. This letter was written entirely without my knowledge. I have never been false to you once in word or deed. When I left you, I lost no time in asking my father's consent to our union, but I was laughed at. When I persisted, I was threatened. Father and mother, everybody, tried to force me into this match with Lady Alicia Fulsomehigh, but I never gave the slightest encouragement. I braved it out for a week, hoping against hope that something might influence my father to change his mind. I wrote to you, assuring you of my constancy, but you did not get the letter; then I wrote another, which I know you did not get, for it is in my hands now. Here it is, let it be my witness that I speak the truth. (*Handing letter.*)

ELLEN. It is dated three years ago.

HENRY. And was written and posted then.

ELLEN. (*Reading.*) 'Dearest Nell,—I cannot gain my father's consent, he is altogether against us; but I am determined to win. Will you, darling, trust yourself to me, poor and penniless as I offer myself? If you will, happiness is in store for us, and a willing heart and a strong arm will always keep the wolf from the door. Meet me at London Bridge Station next Wednesday, at 12 o'clock, and we will commence our battle against the world. May God keep you, my own little wife that will be.—Henry Aston.' And did you intend this for me?

HENRY. That is the second letter I sent you. Of course I thought you received them both. I waited at the station for you, and you never came. Then I went to enquire for you where you had been employed, but you had gone, and not a trace was left for me to follow. You had disappeared as though you wanted to run away from me.

ELLEN. Oh! how terribly we have both been mistaken.

HENRY. But, Ellen, you still love me?

ELLEN. And shall while I live.

HENRY. (*Embracing her.*) My darling.

ELLEN. (*Disengaging herself.*) But how was this letter delayed? It is dated Tuesday, and I did not leave until the following Saturday.

HENRY. It reached me a week ago through the Returned Letter Office. It appears that in the Post Office it accidentally slipped inside the cover of a large trade circular, where it lay concealed and unnoticed. When this circular reached its destination, the gentleman to whom it was addressed threw it carelessly in a drawer, unopened, where it lay till about ten days ago, when chancing to see it, he tore it open, and discovered the letter. He immediately enclosed it, with a letter of explanation, in another envelope, and forwarded it; but, as you had then left that address, it was returned to me, and it was only a few days ago that I received it. I then learned for the first time that you had not wantonly disregarded my offer.

ELLEN. Oh, cruel, cruel letter, what misery you have brought!

HENRY. Nay, perhaps it was providential. If I had married you then, I might be fighting for bread—perhaps unsuccessfully—now. But a change has taken place: I can marry you now without fear of opposition. I am my own master—my father is dead. You can and must come now and reign in my heart and my home.

ELLEN. No, no, I cannot—I cannot. Oh, this is the very cruelty of fate. It is too late, too late!

HENRY. Too late! Good heavens, Ellen, am I dreaming, or are you mad?

ELLEN. Neither. We have made a dreadful mistake, but we must abide by it.

HENRY. A mistake! Was I mistaken three years ago when I thought you laid your head on this breast, and promised to be my wife? Was I mistaken when I thought I heard you say you loved me? Good heavens, did I not hear you say just now that you love me still?

ELLEN. You did, for I do—I do.

HENRY. Then what is the mistake? You will be my wife.

ELLEN. I cannot.

HENRY. How is this? You love me—. Oh, Ellen, It cannot be—. Kind heaven, grant it is not that! You have not, believing me false, married another?

*Enter HAROLD, L.*

ELLEN. No, no—but almost. I have promised to marry another.

HENRY. Thank heaven, then it is not too late.

ELLEN. Alas, it is—it is. If I break my promise, I break an honest man's heart. He loves me so dearly.

HENRY. He cannot love you as I do.

ELLEN. Nor do I love him as I do you; but he has been so kind, so good, so true a friend.

HENRY. And is there no thought for me, who spent three years in care and bitterness through love for you? What will my life be without you?

ELLEN. Do not forget I love you. Then think of my life. I must not think of it; I must not think of you; I must do my duty.

HENRY. Our duty is to do what is right in the sight of God, and God never inflicted misery.

ELLEN. But duty has before now been a trial.

HENRY. Which led to happiness. We have had our trials, God knows, and now should be the time of happiness. Oh, come to me, Ellen, have pity on me. He never—he could not love you as I do.

HAROLD. 'Tis false; I love her as truly and entirely as God has

placed it in the power of man to love. You may love her as well—you can never love her more than I do. Aye, 'tis true, and I can prove how deep that love is: let this be my witness in the sight of man. (*He joins ELLEN's and HENRY's hands together.*) May God bless you both! Do not speak to me, Ellen, I have heard all. True love is not selfish, and true love teaches me that for your happiness I can make the sacrifice of my own. (*He sinks into chair by table, covering his face with his hands; ELLEN and HENRY on either side of him.*)

*CURTAIN.*

# TRUE.

## CHARACTERS.

ERNEST WILDING (aged 20), a fast young man.

FRED HAWTHORNE (aged 25), an engineer.

MR. CAREFUL (aged 60), a lawyer.

MRS. FAIRFAX (aged 50), a widow.

ALICE FAIRFAX (aged 22), her daughter.

SCENE.—*Morning Room of MRS. FAIRFAX'S House at Brighton. French windows, C., in back, opening on to balcony. View of sea and sky beyond. Doors R. U. E. and L. U. E. Fireplace R. 2 E. Modestly furnished in modern style. ALICE discovered seated by fireplace at work.*

ALICE. Another weary day to get through, with its heavy burden of suspense. Each morning I await the postman with renewed hope, only to be disappointed. I must be very foolish; but my heart grows faint with this sickening alternation of feverish expectation and terrible despair. I cannot fix my mind upon anything. (*Puts her work on the table*). Not a line comes to cheer my heart under its load of solitude and persecution. Does love make one selfish, I wonder? If Fred only knew what I suffer. Yet of course he cannot know; he may be suffering himself, poor fellow. He may be sick or shipwrecked. It is the suspense which is so unendurable. He always used to write so regularly. Here I have the last letter I received from him six months ago:—"My own love, you cannot conceive what a comfort the knowledge of your pure affection is to me in this strange country. Although I am too hardworked to have time to feel dull, still if I had not the thought of your love to sustain me, I feel I should not have the spirit and heart in my labors which I have now. The scenery of this country is singularly impressive, though I have few opportunities of exploration. All my thoughts are bent upon giving satisfaction to my employers, and so securing for myself the means by which I may hope to maintain you ever near me. This object once attained, I shall possess as high and perfect a happiness as a man may hope for in this life." What a manly letter, and how proud I am to have the love of such a man! My most precious possession is this miniature which he gave me. That frank open face, with its firm and even grave expression, appeals to my heart irresistibly. I cannot doubt him: never as long as I live can I question his love or his faith, the clear, piercing look of his honest eyes when he plighted his troth to me, can never fade from my memory. Still I do long for some news of him. (*Takes up her work again*).

*Enter MRS. FAIRFAX R. U. E.*

MRS. F. What! still sitting moping over that miserable pretence for work. Why don't you set about something useful? Or better

still, why don't you go out for a walk, and get some natural color back to your pale cheeks? Why don't you take your mother's advice? Don't you think I have your truest interests at heart? I only wish to settle you comfortably in life. What's the good of your pining and fretting after a harum-scarum young fellow, who evidently cares very little about you, and who at any rate can do nothing for you except smother your beauty in shabby gentility?

ALICE. Dear mother, why will you say these things to me? You were not always so bitter against poor Fred. It is hard to turn upon him in his absence; besides, he *loves* me, and *I cannot* but be true to him.

MRS. F. Fiddlestick! loves you? How long does a man's love last after marriage, especially if he have to work for his own living and yours? Nothing hardens the heart and cools the affections like an ever yawning purse, or diurnal repetitions of cold mutton or hash. Why are you so sentimental? Once secure comfort and money, and you'll soon find you can shift without love.

ALICE. I am not sentimental, mother. I know one cannot *live* without money, I am sure one can never be happy without love. Fred is not a poor man, mamma; he will have enough for us to live upon.

MRS. F. Live, you call it? I call it vegetating. Why marry such a prospect when there's a man to your hand who would give you \$5000 a year, and the best of everything? (*Crosses to L.*)

ALICE (R. C.) Because I am not in love with luxuries. The large majority in the world must ever be content to "vegetate" as you call it. Why should I be blamed if, finding enough to *live* upon, I prefer those luxuries which never pale—love and cheerfulness in the home.

MRS. F. You are an incorrigible girl. This Quixotic humor of yours is simply obstinacy. Mr. Hawthorne has been absent a whole year, and for the last six months you have heard nothing of him, and yet you elect to throw away such a chance as few girls obtain. Mr. Wilding is a man of wealth and position. I have consulted our friend Mr. Careful, and he admits that you could make no better match.

ALICE (*warmly*). Then Mr. Careful is very false, he always professed to be Fred's friend before he left us; but he is a lawyer, and so I suppose favors the client who can give the largest fee.

MRS. F. Now, now, child, if you are going to lose your temper, you had better retire to your room. (*Servant appears, R. U. E., and announces MR. CAREFUL*). Show him in at once. Now, Alice, leave us together, for I wish to have a few words with our friend in private.

ALICE (*going L. U. E.*) After what you have just told me, I have no wish to meet him (*returning*). But, mamma dear, I wish you would not trouble yourself about my marriage. I would rather not marry. Why may I not continue to live with you happily, as we have always done.

MRS. F. Tush! child—go—no more words. It is my duty to try and secure for you some social position, and, notwithstanding your ingratitude, I will do my duty. (*Exit ALICE sadly, L. U. E.*)

*Enter R. U. E., MR. CAREFUL.*

MR. CAREFUL. My dear Mrs. Fairfax, I hope my visit is not inopportune. Ahem! I never do anything rash. Ahem! I hope I was mistaken, but did not somebody leave the room as I entered? Excuse me, but I fear I interrupted a family confidence. I have so much respect for family confidences, you know. Mere force of habit, my dear madame, mere force of habit of course, since my retirement from professional pursuits.

MRS. F. My dear old friend, I wish you to have more than a passing interest in *our* family confidences. You know I have always consulted you. I wish nothing concealed from you. I want all the help which your wise and cautious head can give me. I am in a sad difficulty about my girl. You know, that little affair with young Hawthorne.

MR. C. Steady, steady, my dear madame. "Little affair?" I understood it to be a serious and binding engagement.

MRS. F. Indeed, I assure you nothing but a foolish proceeding. I was wrong to let matters run on as far as they appear to have reached. Unfortunately my dear Alice has worked herself into a most Quixotic and romantic humor over this decidedly handsome, but sadly impecunious young man.

MR. C. Steady, steady, my dear madame. It appeared to me that you yourself were very favorably disposed toward the young man, and did he not go abroad to cure his chronic impecuniosity, and to make his fortune.

MRS. F. Oh, my dear sir, that is so extremely problematical. Long engagements are not healthy for young girls. Then you know an engineer's wife—I've seen the young man covered with smoke and black—such a dirty business.

MR. C. My dear madame, there's dirty business in every profession, not even *the law* excepted. Mr. Hawthorne has acquired a practical knowledge of mining operations. All the dirt in *his* business will wash off, ma'am.

MRS. F. But he may be seven years before he returns. I think it is high time my dear Alice was comfortably provided for. She has met with a chance which few girls obtain. Mr. Ernest Wilding, a gentleman of means, is sincerely in love with her, and prepared to lay his hand and fortune at her feet. Ought I, as a prudent mother, to allow her to throw away such a certainty for the sake of a chimera—a mere infatuation?

MR. C. My dear madame, I make it a rule never to commit myself to an opinion on the spur of the moment. It is a very nice arrangement as it stands; there's only one trifling obstacle in the way, and that is, the state of the young lady's heart. From the little I know of her, I believe her to be an exceptional young lady, as the sex goes in this material age. She possesses two unpractical failings—womanly affections, and a sensitive organization. Her friends in society complain that she has no æsthetic tastes, and I have observed that she has *not* a keen eye for business—an indispensable qualification for a woman of the Nineteenth Century.

MRS. F. (*offended*). Then I am to understand that you favor her view of the matter?

MR. C. By no means, my dear Mrs. Fairfax. I only endorse your admirably keen insight as to her failings, though I will own I feel sorry for poor Mr. Hawthorne, as I always entertained a lively admiration for that young gentleman's character.

MRS. F. But surely I have the right to dispose of my daughter's hand as I think proper?

MR. C. Indisputably, dear madame. You have authority on your side.

*Servant enters R. U. E., and announces MR. WILDING.*

MRS. F. Most opportune. Show him up instantly. Now, Mr. Care-

ful, you shall judge for yourself whether I am capable of choosing my son-in-law.

MR. C. Dear madame, I never doubted your judgment, it was your daughter's I ventured to question.

*Enter R. U. E., ERNEST WILDING, spruce and handsome.*

WILDING. My dear Mrs. Fairfax, I hope this morning call is not inconvenient, but I have something important to communicate. (*Bowing to MR. CAREFUL*). I perceive you already have a visitor, though I hoped to find you alone.

MR. CAREFUL bows, and comes down right corner.

MRS. F. This is Mr. Careful. Pray speak unreservedly before him, he is my oldest friend, and entirely in my confidence. Pray be seated.

WILDING. That alters the case. You know, my dear madame, the one interest I have nearest to my heart.

MR. C. (*aside*). He's too cool. He'll overreach himself. These clever men generally do.

MRS. F. It would be ungrateful in me to pretend to misunderstand you, sir.

WILDING. My whole future happiness depends upon my obtaining your daughter's consent to be my wife.

MR. C. (*aside*). Nice confession from the man that Fred Hawthorne calls his dearest friend. I must be extremely cautious.

WILDING. You have hitherto most kindly favored me; but Alice, I regret to say, still appears to entertain a rooted aversion to me.

MRS. F. Believe me, Mr. Wilding, her obstinacy in this matter occasions me the deepest distress.

MR. C. Excuse me. From what Mrs. Fairfax has been so good as to tell me, I think obstinacy is hardly the word. I am given to understand that the young lady's affections are already engaged.

WILDING. I am aware, sir, that I have a rival, and it is a painful matter to me that the rival in question is my oldest friend (*with energy*). But sir, love is invincible, and—

MR. C. My dear sir, I can say no more. It is not my place to cross-examine you (*with meaning*). (*Then aside*). Dear me! he's a nice æsthetic looking specimen of the old-fashioned article, hypocrite. (*Goes up R.*)

WILDING (*aside*). I don't like this old gentleman's manner (*to Mrs. F.*) I cannot subdue my love for your daughter, madame.

MRS. F. (*sotto voce*). My old friend, it appears, was much taken with poor infatuated Mr. Hawthorne; but you, as his oldest friend, must know that he is not in a position to maintain a wife.

WILDING. My dear Mrs. Fairfax, that's just it. I feel Alice could never be happy with him. Fred has to work so hard, he ought not to think of marriage, it will ruin his prospects. He's too young, and the probability is that he will find some girl abroad more to his taste.

MRS. F. So I think. And indeed I believe it is always best for a girl to marry a man some years her senior.

MR. C. (*aside*). A very pretty theory. They little think I'm "watching the case" for young Hawthorne. He, he, he. (*Chuckling*).

MRS. F. Don't you agree with me, Mr. Careful?

MR. C. My dear madame, I can only hope Mr. Wilding fully appreciates the excellent wisdom of his future mother-in-law. I am only wondering if Miss Alice will rightly appreciate the earnest forethought

being exercised on behalf of her future happiness. Her case is in such excellent hands, that I feel any advice on my part would be superfluous and impertinent. *Au revoir*, my dear Mrs. Fairfax. I will look in later to learn the result of our consultation. Good-bye, Mr. Wilding. Allow me to congratulate you on your chances of obtaining so pretty a wife, and so excellent a mother-in-law. (*Bowing politely*).

WILDING (*aside*). This old gentleman makes me nervous. Pah! He's only in his dotage. (MRS. FAIRFAX rings the bell. WILDING talks apart to her).

MR. C. (*aside, going R. 3 E*). Now, I wonder if that girl will have the pluck to hold out? If not, all my caution goes for nothing. If she loves young Hawthorne as much as I believe she does, I've nothing to fear. This double-faced plutocrat has prepared some *ruse* which I fancy I can fathom. At any rate, I've a little dynamic power in preparation for him, which will give him a shock like an "infernal machine." (*Exit R. U. E.*)

MRS. F. I fully appreciate your motives of delicacy for the reputation of your friend. I wish for no particulars. I trust you implicitly. I will send Alice to you. I hope you may prevail with her. It is my most earnest desire that she should be your wife. She knows my wishes in the matter. Do your best to win her consent; show her the folly of her infatuation. Depend upon it she will be grateful to us both one day. I am sure no woman could fail to be happy in the position which you can secure for her. (*Exit R. U. E.*)

WILDING (*opening the door and bowing her out*). At last. Once your daughter my wife, old lady, you shall have your *congé*—there's nothing like an imposing appearance to befool these vain old harridans. I do love the girl honestly, better than I ever loved any woman before. She will open a new life for me. That is my only excuse. My love carries me on. I dare not think of what I am doing, for I feel then what a villain I am making of myself. Yet Fred was a fool to impose such a trust in me. If he really loved her he might have known that no mortal man could resist her exquisite charms. It's a desperate game I'm playing. Luckily I was able to persuade her mother to assist me by intercepting his letters. Yet it is very strange that there was only one letter to intercept after we arranged the plan. Why did Fred cease writing? that seems unaccountable to me. However, it helps to bear out the little fiction I have here (*tapping his breast pocket*) prepared to subdue the unwilling object of my passion. I don't like that old gentleman—I remember Fred was precious thick with him before he left. Is it possible that the same mistrust of the mother, which prevailed upon him to confide so much to me, can have induced him to place the old boy on guard too? Pah! I've gone too far to recede. I care for nothing if I only win her. What if Fred have been warned? Even then there's time. If only I can work on her spirit, she'll marry me off hand out of *pique*. Then I'll carry her off amid scenes where she'll forget the past and learn to love me as if her old flame had never existed.

(*This soliloquy must be spoken reflectively, but dramatically, and not to the audience—the actor must pace the stage restlessly.*)

Enter ALICE firmly, R. U. E. Down L.

ALICE (*up R. aside*). My mother insists upon my hearing what this hateful man has to say. (*Aloud*). Mr. Wilding, my mother has com-

manded me to undergo an interview with you here. I will be candid at once and confess that this meeting is exceedingly painful to me. I hope you will have the kindness to cut it as short as possible.

WILDING. Miss Fairfax, your words afford me little encouragement enough, but I cannot forego this last opportunity of pleading with you. I believe you can have no conception of the depth and sincerity of my love for you. In consequence of your unconcealed dislike for me I have endeavored to stifle the passion which consumes me, but without avail. I cannot persuade myself but that your aversion for me will be short-lived. Surely, seeing that I have your mother's favor, I can be no bad match for you. I am fortunate in being able to offer you a comfortable and even luxurious home, a good social position, and with these a life which shall be devoted to obeying your slightest wish. What is it that you see in me which leads you to imagine that anything but happiness could come of our union?

ALICE. Mr. Wilding, as I have before informed you, my heart is irrevocably given to another, and that other a man whose friend you once professed yourself to be. Yet to satisfy your own selfish passion you have not scrupled to use the influence, which by reason of your superior wealth and position, you have gained over my poor mother's too worldly mind, to induce me to play false to the man I love during his absence. You insult me by thinking me capable of such unwomanly baseness. Ask yourself, sir, what *your* love can be worth which would lead you to marry and profess to respect a woman who could be capable of such despicable weakness. Not content yourself with being a traitorous friend you would prevail upon *me* to play the traitor to the man whose wife I have pledged myself to be.

WILDING. These are cruel words, Miss Fairfax. They evidently spring from your infatuation for an absent man, of whose prospects you have no definite assurance and of whose fidelity even you can have no adequate proof. No wonder your mother is anxious lest your future happiness should be hopelessly wrecked.

ALICE (*contemptuously*). I do not wonder, sir, that with your ideas of love and honor, you should utterly fail to conceive the existence of such virtues as faith and trust.

WILDING. Some degree of *conviction* at least is necessary to sustain one's faith. What if I could prove to you that the object of your devotion, the idol of your silent adoration, is quite unworthy of the precious sacrifices you are preparing to offer? the hero of a woman's imagination is generally very poor flesh and blood to the clear-sighted eyes of the world at large.

ALICE. It is a poor love that runs no risks. If the man I love should prove unworthy of my affections, it is for me to make the discovery to my own satisfaction. I can owe nothing to malicious tale-bearing or unmanly back-biting.

WILDING. And this mistaken heroism leads you to believe only in the sincerity of one. You will wait until it is too late. Women early realize the fact that marriage at the best is but a comedy in prose—generally very dull prose, though it is preceded by a prologue in very pretty verse called courtship; dazzled by its poetic glamor, they rush eagerly into the first act of the comedy only to discover that as the play proceeds its tone changes. Instead of mirth and laughter they find dispelled illusions, blighted hopes—ending perhaps in a wretched tragedy of broken hearts.

ALICE (*a little hysterical*). Aha—your words, sir, would be ridiculous if they were not so deeply offensive.

WILDING (*forcibly*). Offensive, because they proceed from the lips of one who loves you, though he finds no favor in your eyes. I had hoped to spare you pain; but I find you obdurate—deaf to reason—insensible even of justice. I have a letter here from the man you love. (*Producing it*). The man who was my friend till the moment I read this. Till the moment I read this miserable apology (with shame in being its recipient) I was prepared to crush down the great passion of my life. But afterwards I felt that my duty at the least was to try and save you. Read, and when you see how all your hopes are wrecked—when you are cast adrift and drowning in despair—perhaps you will deign to snatch the straw I offer you to save your honor. (*Gives her the letter, and turns L. Aside*). Not a bad bit of bombast that. Rather overdone, I'm afraid, like my imitation of his writing. Hope she won't detect the difference.

ALICE (*frightened, trying to read letter. Goes R.*) "Lisbon, Dec. 3rd, 1881." That's the place his last letter to me was dated from. "My dear Ernest,—I am afraid you will think I am neglecting you. I have been very busy; though I am not progressing so well as I anticipated. But I have delayed writing, because I have a rather delicate matter to break to you. I almost despair of ever being able to raise enough money to satisfy the greedy claims of that worldly-minded Mrs. Fairfax. Poor little Alice"—he speaks of me with contempt—"I almost wish I had not proceeded so far in that affair—I was too hasty. I may have to remain out here for years. I doubt if Alice be strong enough to share my hard life. If I see no better prospect of realizing a fortune, I shall not return to my home at all, but settle down here. I hope Alice will forget me. I am not worthy of her. I could not bear to make her miserable. I see no prospect in returning—while here, I may tell you in confidence, that I have attracted the favorable attention of a young and pretty Spanish girl, whose father has means, and who appears to regard me with especial favor. I shall esteem it a great proof of your friendship if you would gently, in due time, break it to Alice that I am not likely to return home at all. If the girl (as is very probable) has some of her mother's nature in her, she won't break her heart over such an unlucky dog as yours faithfully, FRED. HAWTHORNE." Great Heaven! Can he have written this heartless letter? If I can believe my eyes this is his writing. (*Secretly pulling out her own letter, and comparing the writing*). The hand I loved so dearly. Oh! how everything seems passing away—there is nothing but pain. But this man here—he shall not see what I suffer. Base, cruel Fred. (*Humbly, but firmly*). Mr. Wilding, I have read this l—letter. As you said just now, my hopes are wrecked, but I do not despair. I—(*sobs convulsively*)—I—I beg you to leave me—leave me at once.

WILDING. I will not leave you till you give me some hope for the future. I have loved you so long and so dearly that I have a right to be heard. You are brave now; but you know you will suffer from the treatment of this weak and worthless man. Alice, if you have a spark of spirit in you, be no longer unhappy; but turn to one who is ready to devote his life to you, and to wait patiently for that love which you now withhold from him.

ALICE. Sir, I have no lack of pride. Believe me, from this moment Mr. Hawthorne will have no place in my heart, nor in my thoughts. But because the man I trusted with my earliest love has proved false and worthless, seems to me no reason that I should ally myself to one whom I loathe and despise.

WILDING. You are heated, Miss Fairfax. You will repent your words

when you have to meet the sneers of the world for a jilted girl, and the reproaches of a kind mother, whose heart you will have broken.

*Enter MRS. FAIRFAX R. U. E.*

ALICE (*firmly*). Mr. Wilding, how dare you speak to me in this manner. You are a shallow schemer. I see through your plan. You hope to lead me to marry you out of *pique*. I have heard of girls selling themselves to appease their outraged vanity. Such girls may have a proper pride, though they have no self-respect. I am not one of these. I wish for no more words on this hateful subject. You have made a mistake, Mr. Wilding, and I leave you to reflect upon it. (*Going, meets MRS. F. up R. C. WILDING down L. C.*)

MRS. F. (*regarding her sternly*). Did I hear you rightly, Alice? I am amazed that you should dare to insult a gentleman of Mr. Wilding's position with such reckless talk. You must be clean out of your senses. (*Down R. L. E.*)

ALICE (*on her knees*). Mother, dear, don't be hard upon me. We may be so happy together if you will only not be hard upon me. This man has shown me reasons why Fred.—Mr. Hawthorne can never be anything to me now. Let me live happily with you, mother dear; but do not ask me to marry. I do not wish to be married.

MRS. F. This is simply folly, child. You cannot remain single all your life. You cannot be happy with me, for I cannot forgive your gross insult to Mr. Wilding, who loves you sincerely, and is ready to sacrifice himself and to give you a home and position such as any girl in her senses would be deeply grateful for.

MR. CAREFUL *enters quietly, R. U. E., his face expresses satisfaction.*

ALICE (*rising*). If it is your wish, mother, I will marry by-and-by—but at least allow me to select a man whom I can respect.

MRS. F. (*angrily*). Alice!—Mr. Wilding, permit me to apologize for my daughter's unpardonable conduct.

MR. C. *walks to window and gazes on the sea view.*

WILDING. Pray don't mention it. Under the circumstances it is natural that her feelings should run away with her. But perhaps I may be permitted to ask the young lady why she denies me her respect? (*Bowing to ALICE*).

ALICE (*firing up*). Because I despise any man who attempts to buy a girl with his money, or attempts to entrap her into marrying him by underhand means. Because I believe a man, who is disloyal to his best friend, to be incapable of bestowing happiness upon the woman he would marry. Because the evidence he has given me of my betrothed husband's infidelity, is insufficient in my eyes to convict him. How do I know but what this vile letter may be a wicked forgery? Such a thing is not impossible. Mr. Hawthorne is far away, and unable to answer for himself. If he be capable of jilting me, and is base enough to do so, I will accept his renunciation only from his own lips. But no charges brought against his honor by interested people in his absence, shall ever persuade me to break my faith with him.

WILDING (*losing his temper*). Insult is all I might have expected from—

MRS. F. (*hotly*). Alice, your brazen impudence astonishes me.

MR. C. (*coming down c.*) Steady, steady, good people. The young lady is bound to defend her own case.

MRS. F. Mr. Careful, you have no right to interfere between me and my child.

MR. C. Excuse me, madame, but I have voluntarily undertaken to watch the case for the defendant, and I move for a fair hearing.

ALICE (*moving towards MR. C.*) Oh! sir, have I not done right, have I not done right?

MR. C. My dear, you have made out an excellent case.

MRS. F. So, sir, you think fit to encourage my daughter in her rebellion against my will?

MR. C. Not exactly, madame. My chief motive is to gain time. To my legal eye it appears that the court is unduly prejudiced against the defendant. Seeing this, I have thought fit to call an important witness in this case, whose arrival I anticipate every moment.

WILDING (*aside*). A witness? what the deuce is he driving at?

MRS. F. Then, sir, you have abused the confidence I unwisely reposed in you.

*Loud knocking, as at front door. ALICE and WILDING both start.*

MRS. F. Who on earth is that?

MR. C. Don't be alarmed. It's only my witness, he is probably rather excited. Naturally so in my opinion.

ALICE (*sotto voce*). Who is it, Mr. Careful? (*The others intent*).

*Servant enters R. U. E., and announces MR. HAWTHORNE.*

*Enter FRED rapidly, R. U. E.*

ALICE (*with a cry, running to him—her arms round him*). It is he! Oh! Fred, Fred (MRS. F. *seems dumbfounded, up L. C.* WILDING *looks ashamed, down L. C.*), say it is all false. Say you are true to me.

FRED (*kissing her*). My darling. (*Then fixing his eyes on WILDING*). Ernest Wilding. It is not difficult for you to guess how I have heard of your despicable conduct. You have attempted to do me an injury which I can never forget. An injury, which, had it been accomplished, I could never forgive. You remember when we were boys at school together, how we settled our disputes. We will find a fitting spot, sir, and try conclusions over this matter, if you have any manhood left in you.

MR. C. Steady, steady, my boy, there are ladies present.

FRED. I can't be polite over such a business as this.

WILDING (*crossing to R. U. E.*) I will not fail you, Mr. Hawthorne. You have beaten me already; but if love has made a coward of me, you shall find I am no cur. (*To ALICE*). Miss Fairfax, for the sake of a hopeless love, I have sacrificed my friend. At least, do me the justice to believe now that I loved you earnestly. (*Exit R. U. E.*)

FRED. He was just like that at school.

MR. C. Ah! more pluck than principle. Let us hope this will be a lesson to him.

FRED. Alice, we owe all to Mr. Careful; it was through his interest in you that I was informed of all that was going on. It was he who advised me to cease writing to you, that he might judge how far that young villain would dare to go. It was he who advised me to come back.

MR. C. Ah? but she was TRUE. I knew she would be. Come, Mrs. Fairfax, take my advice, make the best of a good son-in-law. His prospects are none so bad, after all.

FRED (*coldly to MRS. F.*) I think even you, madame, will be satisfied when I tell you that I have secured a berth worth \$1500 a-year, with sure promotion to the post of Chief Engineer at \$5000.

MR. C. (*aside to FRED*). Lucky dog, you've an excuse for "cutting your mother-in-law." *Goes up and coaxes MRS. FAIRFAX.*

FRED. You never doubted me, darling?

ALICE. Never in my heart. It was hard to bear when you did not write, dear. But I could almost forgive Mr. Wilding for enabling me to prove how truly I love you. (*Embrace, and slight pause*).

FRED (*looks at her tenderly*). The noblest quality of Love is to be TRUE; for only the faithful sweetheart makes the faithful wife. (*Embrace. Ring*).

MR. C. *showing picture to MRS. F.*

[CURTAIN QUICK.]

## PICKING UP THE PIECES.

## CHARACTERS.

LORD DAWLISH. a middle-aged nobleman.

MRS. MELTON, a widow, no longer young.

SCENE.—MRS. MELTON's apartment in Florence. *All the furniture is gathered into the middle of the room, and covered with a sheet.* MRS. MELTON is a widow and no longer young. LORD DAWLISH, who comes to make a morning call, has also forgotten his youth.

DAWLISH. Good morning, Mrs. Melton. I hope—Holloa! There is nobody here. What is all this about?

*(After some consideration he proceeds to investigate the extraordinary erection with the point of his stick. After convincing himself of its nature he lifts a side of the sheet, pulls out an easy-chair, inspects it, and finally sits on it.)*

She is an extraordinary woman. I don't know why I like her. I don't know why she likes me. I suppose that she does like me. If not, what a bore I must be! I come here every day—and stay. I suspect that I am an awful fellow to stay. I suppose I ought to go now. This furniture trophy don't look like being at home to callers. But perhaps she is out: and then I can go on sitting here. I must sit somewhere. May I smoke? I dare say: thank ye, I will. Smoke? Smoke. There is a proverb about smoke. I wonder how I came to know so many proverbs? I don't know much. "There is no smoke without fire." Yes, that's it. There is uncommon little fire in a cigarette. Little fire and much smoke. Yes, that's like this— I mean— Let me—what d'ye call it?—review my position. Here I sit. Here I sit every day. That is, smoke, I suppose—plenty of smoke. Is there any fire? That is the question. I wish people would mind there own business. It is trouble enough to mind one's own business, I should think. But yet there are people—there's that Flitterly, for instance—d—d little snob. Flitterly makes it the business of his life to go about saying that I am going to be married; and all because here is a woman who is not such an intolerable bore as—as other people. Flitterly is the sort of man who says that there there is no smoke without fire. What is this? That is what I want to know. Is this business of mine all smoke, all cigarette and soda, or—confound Flitterly! I wonder if I ought to pull his nose? I am

afraid that that sort of thing is out of date. I don't think I could pull a nose, unless somebody showed me how. Perhaps if somebody held him steady, I might. I don't think I could do it. He has got such a ridiculous little nose! I wonder if I ought to give up coming here? I don't know where I should go to. I wonder if I am bound in honor, and all that? Perhaps that is out of date too. I sometimes think that I am out of date myself.

*(After this he fishes under the sheet with his stick, and brings to light a photograph-book, which he studies as he continues to meditate.)*

I wonder if she would take me if I asked her? I don't believe she would: she is a most extraordinary woman. Who is this, I wonder? I never saw this book before. I suppose that this is the sort of man women admire. He would know how to pull a nose. I dare say he has pulled lots of noses in his day. Does it for exercise. Suburban cad. A kind of little tooting lady-killer. I wonder she puts such a fellow in her book. Why, here he is again, twice as big and fiercer. Here is another—and another! Hang him he is all over the book!

*(He pitches the book under the sheet. Then MRS. MELTON comes in wearing a large apron, and armed with duster and feather-brush.)*

MRS. M. Lord Dawlish! What are you doing here?

D. Nothing.

MRS. M. How well you do it!

D. Thank you.

MRS. M. But you are doing something: you are smoking.

D. Am I? I beg your pardon.

MRS. M. And you shall do more: you shall help me. I have been up to my eyes in work since seven o'clock.

D. Seven! Why don't you make somebody else do it?

MRS. M. Because I do it so well. I have a genius for dusting, and Italian servants have not. In this old city they have an unfeigned respect for the dust of ages.

D. Have they? How funny! But they might help you, I should think. Where are they? There was nobody to let me in. Where are your servants?

MRS. M. Gone.

D. Gone!

MRS. M. Gone and left me free. I packed them all off—man and maid, bag and baggage.

D. But who will look after you?

MRS. M. I. I am fully equal to the task. But come, be useful. You shall help me to rearrange the furniture.

D. Help! I!

MRS. M. Yes, help! You! I am not quite sure that you can't.

*(As he proceeds to brush the back of a chair with a feather-brush, it occurs to him to apologize for his intrusion.)*

D. I suppose I ought to apologize for coming so early. Somehow I found myself in the Palazzo—and the door of your apartments was open, and so I came in. I took the liberty of an old friend.

MRS. M. I believe we have been acquainted for at least a month.

D. Only a month! It is not possible. It must be more than a month.

MRS. M. Apparently our precious friendship has not made the time pass quickly.

D. No. I mean that it never does pass quickly.

MRS. M. Work, work, work! It's work that makes the day go quick. I am busy from morning till night, and time flies with me.

D. Then you shorten your life.

MRS. M. And keep it bright. Better one hour of life than a century of existence! Dear, dear! how did my best photograph-book get knocked down here?

D. I am afraid that that was my awkwardness. I was looking at it, and it—it went down there.

MRS. M. Don't let it break from you again. Here, take it, and sit down and be good. You have no genius for dusting.

D. Nobody ever called me a genius. I have been called all sorts of names; but nobody ever went so far as to call me a genius.

MRS. M. And yet you ain't stupid. I always maintain that you are not really stupid.

D. Ain't I? Thank you. Who is this man—this fine-looking man with the frown and whiskers?

MRS. M. He is handsome, isn't he?

D. I don't know. I am not a judge of male beauty.

MRS. M. Men never admire each other. They are too envious and too vain.

D. Are they? And women? What are women?

MRS. M. What are women? What are they not? Oh, for one word to comprehend the sex! Women are—yes, women are womanly.

D. That sounds true. And women are effeminate.

MRS. M. Only females are effeminate.

D. Oh! I wonder what that means?

MRS. M. But John is handsome. Ask any woman.

D. John!

MRS. M. Yes, that's John—my cousin.

D. I hate cousins. They are so familiar and so personal.

MRS. M. I like them. They are so—so—

D. Cousinly.

MRS. M. Precisely.

D. Cousins are cousinly. Does he dye his whiskers?

MRS. M. Dye! Never. He has too much to do. John is a great man—a man of will, a man of force, a man of iron. That's what I call a man.

D. Do you? I don't call an iron man a man.

MRS. M. He is the first of American engineers.

D. A Yankee stoker.

MRS. M. Dear John! He is a good fellow. He gave me that little jar by your hand.

D. Dear John is not a judge of china. I always hated that little jar. I shall break it some day.

MRS. M. If you do, I'll never speak to you again.

D. Please do. Tell me some more about John. Has not he got a fault, not even a little one?

MRS. M. He has the fault of all men—vanity. He knows that he is handsome.

D. I thought he dyed his whiskers.

Mrs. M. He does not dye his whiskers.

D. You seem very keen about the whiskers. Here they are in all sizes, and from all over the world—*carte-de-visite* whiskers, cabinet whiskers, Rembrandt-effect whiskers, whiskers from Naples, from New York, from Baker Street. You must like them very much.

Mrs. M. I like the man. I like self-respect, bravery, and perseverance. I like honest work. O Lord Dawlish, what a shame it is that you don't do something!

D. Do something? I? I do do something. I—well, I go about.

Mrs. M. Oh! you go about.

D. Yes—with a dog in England; without a dog abroad.

Mrs. M. Oh! abroad without a dog. I regret that I shall never have the pleasure of receiving the cur.

D. The cur's a collie.

Mrs. M. And so you think that man fulfills his destiny by going about.

D. Somebody must go about, you know.

Mrs. M. Yes, a squirrel in a cage. What you want is work. You ought to take a line.

D. Go fishing?

Mrs. M. Be serious, and listen to me. Here you are in Florence.

D. I believe I am.

Mrs. M. You are in the midst of priceless treasures. The finest works of art are all around you.

D. I believe they are.

Mrs. M. Take a line: take up something, for instance the Greek statues.

D. Ain't I rather old to play with marbles?

Mrs. M. Not a bit. Nobody is old who isn't old on purpose. Compare, classify, and make a book, or even a pamphlet.

D. I hate pamphlets. They are always coming by the post.

Mrs. M. I suppose it's not the thing for a man in your position to turn author.

D. I don't think I ever did hear one of our lot writing books. But that doesn't much matter. I should like to take a line, or a course or a—I took a course of waters once at Homburg; or Kissingen, or somewhere; but they came to an end, like all other things.

Mrs. M. Lord Dawlish, are you joking?

D. No.

Mrs. M. Then be serious: take up a subject; set to work; produce your pamphlet—at least a pamphlet. It might grow into a book.

D. Heaven forbid! I could not do it.

Mrs. M. Why not?

D. Writing a book is so infernally public. I should be talked about.

Mrs. M. How dreadful! The owl, who is modest, withal, and shrinks from notoriety, remains at home until sunset.

D. You called me a squirrel before. Are you going through all the zoölogical what-d'ye-call-'em?

Mrs. M. Perhaps even I shall be talked about before long.

D. I should not wonder if you were.

Mrs. M. Yes, even I, humble individual as I am, may perhaps be talked about when I set up my studio.

D. Your what?

Mrs. M. My studio. Yes, I've quite made up my mind. There

are many worse painters in Florence than myself. I mean to be a real painter, and no longer play with color.

D. And sell your pictures?

Mrs. M. For the largest possible prices.

D. Is not that an odd sort of thing for a lady?

Mrs. M. No. We have changed all that. Many women paint nowadays.

D. I have heard so.

Mrs. M. I believe that you are making jokes this morning.

D. I don't think so. I don't like jokes; they are very fatiguing. It's John's fault.

Mrs. M. What's John's fault?

D. No man likes to have another crammed down his throat—unless he is a confounded cannibal.

Mrs. M. Very well. I will refrain from cramming anybody down your throat. But I won't let you off. I feel that I have a mission.

D. Good Heavens!

Mrs. M. I have a mission to reform you.

D. Please don't do it.

Mrs. M. I must. Why don't you do your proper work? Why not go back to England and take care of your property?

D. Because my agent takes care of it so much better than I could. I inherited my place, and I can't get rid of it. But, luckily, land can't follow me about. That is why I come abroad.

Mrs. M. Without the dog.

D. He stays with the land. He likes it. He hates travelling.

Mrs. M. So would you if you travelled in a dog-box.

D. I wish you would not talk about me. I am so tired of myself.

Mrs. M. But you interest me.

D. Thank you. That is gratifying. Don't let us pursue the subject further.

Mrs. M. I must. It's my mission. I picture the pleasures of an English country life. You build cottages; you drain fields; you carry flannel to the old women.

D. No; I could not do it. I don't think I could carry flannel to an old woman.

Mrs. M. So much for duties. Then for amusement. Are you fond of shooting?

D. Pheasants are all so much alike. I gave up shooting when my sister took to it.

Mrs. M. Your sister!

D. She is a keen sportsman—awfully keen. I went out with her once. I feel them still sometimes in my back when it's cold weather.

Mrs. M. You like hunting better? In this country they shoot the fox.

D. Do they? That must be curious. I wonder if I could bring myself to try that. I almost think that—

Mrs. M. Go home and hunt.

D. I have given up hunting. Rather rough on Teddie, don't you think?

Mrs. M. Who's Teddie?

D. Don't you know Teddie?

Mrs. M. Is he the dog?

D. No; he is my brother. I thought that everybody knew Teddie. Teddie knows everybody. Teddie likes me to hunt. He is always

bothering me to buy horses—with tricks. Or to go by excursion trains. Or to shoot lions in Abyssinia. He is an awfully ambitious fellow, Teddie. Dont you think we might change the subject?

MRS. M. Not yet. I have not done my duty yet. Politics! Oh, for political influence! Oh, for power! Why, you must be—of course you are a—thingummy what's-his-name.

D. Very likely, if you say so.

MRS. M. An hereditary legislator. Think of that. Think of your influence in the country; of the power you might wield. Go in for politics.

D. Well, you know, I—I inherited my politics with my place, and I can't get rid of them. But Teddie does them for me. He was always rather a muff, Teddie was; and so they put him into politics.

MRS. M. Are there muffs in your family? But don't interrupt me. I must have the last word. Anything else I will give up, but the last word—never. In your position you must sway something. If you won't sway the country, sway the county; if you won't sway the county, sway a vestry, a workhouse, a something, or anything. Only do something. You would be a great deal happier, and—I don't know why I should be afraid to say—a great deal better, if you would only do something.

D. You forget that I am delicate. The doctors say I am delicate, and that is why I come abroad. I do wish you would change the subject. It is a delicate subject, you know.

MRS. M. Again! You have only one malady—idleness.

D. No, no, no! All the doctors—

MRS. M. Quacks!

D. As you please. But I have not the rude health of some strong-minded women.

MRS. M. Nor I the rude manners of some weak-minded men. But I beg your pardon; I won't be rude.

D. Was I rude? I am awfully sorry. I beg your pardon. But I am so tired of myself.

MRS. M. Then work—work and be cured. Do something—anything. A stitch in time saves nine.

D. Oh, if you come to proverbs—look before you leap.

MRS. M. Procrastination is the thief of time.

D. More haste less speed. If one does nothing, at least one does no harm.

MRS. M. Nor does a stuffed poodle.

D. Another beast! I have been a squirrel and an owl. And, after all, I did not come here to talk about myself, nor poodles.

MRS. M. Did you come to speak of the weather?

D. I wanted to speak about you.

MRS. M. About me! Here's a turning of the tables.

D. May I?

MRS. M. If you have energy for so lively a topic.

D. May I speak plainly as an old friend?

MRS. M. As a month-old friend. Speak plainly by all means. I've a passion for plain speaking.

D. It is an uncommonly disagreeable subject.

MRS. M. Thank you. You were going to talk about me.

D. I don't mean that; of course not. It does not matter whether I talk about you or not. But there are other people here who talk about you.

MRS. M. Talk about me! What do they say?

D. They say things I don't like; so I thought that I—

MRS. M. Thank you, Lord Dawlish; but I can take very good care of myself.

D. Very well.

MRS. M. Why should I care what this Anglo-Florentine society say of me? It doesn't hurt me; I don't care what they say of me; I am entirely indifferent; I am— Oh, do not stand there like a stick, but tell me what these people say about me!

D. I—I— It is so awkward for me to tell you. You know Flitterly?

MRS. M. Flitterly! A sparrow!

D. Oh, he is a sparrow! What is to be done to the sparrow?

MRS. M. Nothing. He is beneath punishment—beneath contempt. A little chattering, intrusive, cruel— I suppose it would not do for me to horsewhip Flitterly?

D. It would be better for me to do that. I thought of pulling his nose; it is a little one; but I might do it with time. I think I should enjoy it.

MRS. M. It's too bad? It's too bad that a woman of my age should not be safe from these wretches—from the tongues of these malicious chatters! The cowards to attack a woman!

D. I was afraid that you would feel it.

MRS. M. I don't feel it. Why should I? Why should I feel it? But, good gracious! is the man going to stand there all day, and never tell what this—what that—pha! what *he* says of me?

D. I don't like to tell you.

MRS. M. Do you take me for a fool, Lord Dawlish?

D. No; for a woman.

MRS. M. What does he say?

D. If you will know, you must. He says—he says that you and I are going to get married.

MRS. M. Married! You and I! Well at least he might have invented something less preposterous.

D. Preposterous!

MRS. M. You and I!

D. I don't see anything preposterous in it. Why should not you and I be married? By George, I have made an offer!

MRS. M. Are you mad? You say—

D. Oh, I don't want to hurry you! Don't speak in a hurry. Think it over—think it over. Take time.

MRS. M. But do you mean—

D. Oh please, don't hurry. Think it over. Any time will do.

MRS. M. Will it?

D. I am not clever, nor interesting; but if you don't mind me, I will do anything I can. You shall have any sort of society you like: fast or slow; literary or swell; or anything. Of course there would be plenty of money, and jewels, and cooks, and all that. You can have gowns, and check-books, and pin-money, and—

MRS. M. And find my own washing and beer. Lord Dawlish, are you offering me a situation?

D. Yes—no—I mean that I—

MRS. M. A thousand thanks. The wages are most tempting; but I have no thought of leaving my present place.

D. I fear that I have been offensive. I beg your pardon. I had better go. Good morning, Mrs. Melton.

MRS. M. Good-by, Lord Dawlish.

*(So he goes out; straightway her mood changes, and she wishes him back again.)*

MRS. M. *(sola.)* He will never come back. I can't let him go for ever. I can't afford to lose a friend who makes me laugh so much. Flitterly may say what he likes—a goose! a sparrow! a grasshopper! I shall call him back.

*(So she calls to him down the stair; then from the window; and as she calls from the window, he comes in at the door, watches her awhile, then speaks.)*

D. Did you call me, Mrs. Melton?

MRS. M. Is the man deaf? I have been screaming like a peacock; and all for your sake—all because I didn't want you to go away angry.

D. I thought it was you who were angry.

MRS. M. No, it was you.

D. Very well.

MRS. M. You must drop the *preposterous* subject for ever; and we will be good friends, as we were before. Sit down and be friendly.

D. Thank you. That is capital. We will be as we were before—as we were before.

MRS. M. You are sure you can bear the disappointment?

D. Oh, yes. We will be friends, as we were. That is much better.

MRS. M. Lord Dawlish, you are simply delicious!

D. Am I? Thank you. And I may come and sit here sometimes?

MRS. M. In spite of Flitterly.

D. Flitterly be hanged!

MRS. M. Yes, by all means.

*(Then he meditates, and after due deliberation speaks.)*

D. I should like to ask you something, Mrs. Melton—something personal.

MRS. M. Ask what you like, and I will answer if I choose.

D. May I ask as a friend—only as a friend, you know—if you are quite determined never to marry again? I know that it is no business of mine; but I can't help being curious about you. I don't think I am curious about anything else. But you are such an extraordinary woman.

MRS. M. Extraordinary because I have refused to be Lady Dawlish. It is strange, very. Oh, don't be alarmed; I have refused. But it is strange. I am a woman, and I refuse rank and wealth. Wealth means gowns and cooks from Paris, a brougham and a victoria, a stepper, a tiger, and a pug: rank means walking out before other women, and the envy of all my sex. I am a woman, and I refuse all these luxuries. You were mad when you offered them.

D. I don't think that I could be mad.

MRS. M. Not another word upon the subject!

D. But won't you satisfy my curiosity?

MRS. M. I never knew you so persistent.

D. I never was before.

MRS. M. Such ardent curiosity, such desperate perserverance, deserve to be rewarded. I have nothing to do for the moment, and there is one luxury which no woman can forego—the luxury of talking about herself. You needn't listen if the effort is too great: I address the chair, or the universe. You will hardly believe it of me: but I cherish a sentiment. There! Years and years ago—how many, I am woman enough not to specify—I lived with an aunt in Paris; you hate cousins, I am not in love with aunts: however, she was my only relation; there was no choice, and there I lived with her in Paris, and was finished; there was nothing to finish, for I knew nothing. Well, it was there, in Paris—I was quite a child—it was there that I one day met a boy scarcely older than myself. I am in love with him still. Quite idyllic, isn't it?

D. Very likely. In Paris? Paris.

MRS. M. There never was any one in the world like him—so brave, so good, so boyish: he rejoiced in life, certain of pleasure and purposing noble work.

D. (*aside.*) Cousin John! Cousin John, of course. Confound Cousin John!

MRS. M. He fell in love with me at once, almost before I had fallen in love with him. We were both so absurdly shy, so silly, and so young. I can see him blush now, and I could blush then. But I shall be sentimental in a minute: this is egregious folly; of course it is folly, and it was folly; of course it was merely childish fancy, boy-and-girl sentiment, calf-love; of course a week's absence would put an end to it; and of course I love him still. But forgive me, Lord Dawlish. Why should I bother you with this worn-out commonplace romance?

D. I like it. It interests me. Go on, if it does not bore you. It reminds me of something—of something which I had better forget.

MRS. M. You shall hear the rest: there isn't much. He was taken away, and—I suppose forgot me. I came out in Paris, went everywhere, was vastly gay, and terribly unhappy. My aunt was youngish, and good-looking—in a way; she was dying to be rid of me, and I knew it; and so things were very uncomfortable at home, until—until I married. Oh, I told him the truth, the whole truth: I told him that the love of my life had gone by. I am glad I told him the truth.

D. An American, was he not?

MRS. M. Yes. I was grateful to him, and proud of him. He was so good and true. But he made light of my story. He thought like the rest, that it was mere girlish fancy; that I should soon forget; that—There, you have my story! Touching, isn't it?

D. It is most extraordinary.

MRS. M. What is most extraordinary?

D. Your story is like my story.

MRS. M. It's everybody's story. It's common as the whooping-cough, and dull as the mumps. But come give me the details of your case.

D. The details! If I can remember them.

MRS. M. If you can remember! Who would be a man?

D. It was in Paris—

MRS. M. In Paris?

D. It is just like your story. Suppose that we take it as told.

MRS. M. Go on. I must hear it.

D. I was sent to Paris when I was a boy, with a bear-leader. There I saw a girl—a little bread and butter miss—and—and I got fond of her. She was the dearest little girl—the best little thing. She was like—like—

MRS. M. Go on. What happened?

D. Nothing.

MRS. M. Nothing! Nonsense! Something always happens.

D. Nothing came of it. They said boy and girl, and calf-love, and all that, like the people in your story: and they packed me off to England.

MRS. M. Why did you go?

D. I always was a fool. They said that it would try the strength of her feelings; that, if we were both of the same mind when I had got my degree, the thing should be.

MRS. M. And you never wrote?

D. No.

MRS. M. Nor did he—never one line.

D. They said she wished me not to write.

MRS. M. How likely! These men, these men! They never know what letters are to woman. What was the end?

D. The usual thing. As soon as my degree was all right I made for Paris. She was gone.

MRS. M. My poor friend! She was dead.

D. Married

MRS. M. Married! How could she be so—

D. It is very like your story, isn't it? Only in my story the parties were not American.

MRS. M. American! What do you mean? I wasn't an American till I married one, and Tom—

D. Then it wasn't Cousin John?

MRS. M. John! No, no, no! Lord Dawlish! Lord Dawlish! What is your family name?

D. My family name? What on earth, my dear Mrs. Melton—

MRS. M. Quick, quick! What is it?

D. Why—er—why—Dashleigh, of course.

MRS. M. And you are Tom Dashleigh?

*(As she looks at him, the truth dawns on him.)*

D. And you are little Kitty Gray?

MRS. M. Oh my bright boy lover, you are lost now indeed.

D. I think I have got a chill.

*(When they have sat a little while in silence, she jumps up.)*

MRS. M. No more sentiment, no more folly! Away with sentiment for ever! The boy and girl lovers are dead long ago; and we old folk who know the world may strew flowers on their grave and be gone. Look up, old friend, look up.

D. Yet you are you, and I—I suppose that I am I.

MRS. M. Young fools! young fools! why should we pity them, we wise old folk who know the world? Love is but—is but—

*(And she dashes into music at the piano: soon her hands begin to fail, and she stoops over them to hide her eyes; then she jumps up in*

*tears, and moving knocks over the little jar which was Cousin John's gift. He would pick it up, but she stops him.)* —

No, no : let it lie there.

D. Shan't I pick up the pieces ?

Mrs. M. Let them lie there. One can never pick up the pieces.

D. Why not ? I don't think I understand. But I can't bear to see you cry. I thought that you could not cry ; that you were too clever and strong-minded to cry. Look here ! You might have made something of me once. Is it too late, Mrs Melton ?

Mrs. M. The jar is broken.

D. Is it too late, Kitty ?

Mrs. M. Let us pick up the pieces together.

**CURTAIN.**

# A LOVER'S STRATAGEM.

## CHARACTERS.

BENJAMIN WILDER, an eccentric old gentleman.  
 FRED, } his sons, aged ten and twelve respectively.  
 CHARLEY, }  
 HARRY WILDER, his nephew, aged twenty,  
 FRANK SMILES, comedian, personates three characters.  
 MR. TWITCH, a shoemaker.  
 MR. SANKEY, a showman.  
 THOMAS, a servant.  
 VILLAGERS, etc., without speaking parts.

SCENE—Room in MR. BENJAMIN WILDER'S house. Doors R. and L.  
 Books, pictures, &c. Small table R. C.; larger table L. C., covered  
 with meehanical appliances. Curtain rises, discovering old  
 WILDER seated at table L. C., working at a small and complicat-  
 ed piece of mechanism, and THOMAS placing chairs behind table,  
 R. C.

WILDER. (*angrily*).—The what, Thomas?

THOMAS. (*pointing to table L. C.*).—The—thingummy, sir.

WILDER. How often must I order you to call things by their right  
 names, Thomas? This is *not* a thingummy; it's a self-acting, auto-  
 matic engine, Thomas; and I anticipate that when it is finished it  
 will electrify all the scientific world. Come and look at it, Thomas.

THOMAS. (*edging towards the door R.*).—I'd rather not, sir—I don't  
 like being 'lectrified.

WILDER. What nonsense, Thomas! Come here!

THOMAS. I'd rather not, sir (*going; stops*). Oh! I nearly forgot to  
 tell you, sir, Mrs. Jenkins, the housekeeper, says the boys must take  
 their lessons in this room this morning.

WILDER. In this room! Why so, Thomas?

THOMAS. She says she's going to give the house a thorough clean.

WILDER. That woman is gone scouring mad! I almost lose my  
 temper at her sometimes; but being a philosopher and a man of the  
 world, of course, I know it's bootless—bootless, Thomas!

THOMAS. Yes, sir.

WILDER. By-the-way, talking of bootless, that reminds me—has  
 Patcher, the bootmaker, sent those boys' boots home?

THOMAS. No; I think not, sir.

WILDER. Then go down as far as his shop immediately, Thomas,  
 and tell him to send those boots this morning—this morning, if he  
 means to make any more for my family. I hate a man who breaks a  
 promise!

THOMAS. Yes; I'll go at once, sir (*going L.*)

WILDER. And, Thomas, tell him to bring his measure with him. My daughter Grace requires new walking-boots.

THOMAS. I'll not forget to remember to tell him, sir. *(Exit L.)*

WILDER. What a strange thing it is that Grace, who is such a sensible girl in other respects, always laughs at my scientific researches? By-the-way, I wonder where she is?

*Enter FRED and CHARLEY, R., with slates and books. They seat themselves at table R. C.*

WILDER. Where is Grace?

FRED. In the garden, Pa.

WILDER. And where is Mr. Grey? Why doesn't he come to superintend lessons?

CHARLEY. He's in the garden, too, pa. He's reading poetry to Grace.

WILDER. Indeed! *(aside)* Highly dangerous *(rises.)* I'll terminate their poetical proceedings with a little plain prose. What assurance on the part of a poor tutor! I suppose I'd be angry if I wasn't a philosopher and a man of the world. *(Exit R.)*

FRED. Lend me your knife, Charley.

CHARLEY. What for?

FRED. Oh, never mind—lend me it.

CHARLEY. I sha'n't without you tell me what you want it for.

FRED. Then keep it. I don't want it. It's good for nothing. I know who'll buy me a new knife; and he'll mend my fishing-rod, too.

CHARLEY. I know who you mean. You mean Cousin Harry; I heard pa say he was coming to-day.

FRED. Well, what if I do mean Cousin Harry? He'll splice my fishing-rod, for he always has a sharp knife—not like your blunt old thing—and I've got lots of string *(takes string from his pocket)*; and Patcher's going to bring me a lump of wax when he brings my boots, and—

CHARLEY. Hush! Here's Mr. Grey and father. *(They bend over their slates.)*

*Enter WILDER and SMILES, R.*

SMILES. But I have an explanation to offer, sir.

WILDER. I have no time to listen to explanations now, sir. *(Looks off L.)* Hallo! who's that driving up to the door? My nephew Harry, as I live! Sit still, boys. *(Exit L.)*

SMILES. *(aside.)*—My old friend Harry Wilder! How provoking! I hope he'll not recognise me just now. *(Aloud.)* Now, boys, pay a little attention to your lessons. *(Seats himself R. of boys, and bends over a book.)*

*Enter WILDER and HARRY, L.*

HARRY. Ah, boys! Fred, Charley, lively as ever! *(Shakes hand.)* I musn't interrupt lessons, I suppose.

WILDER. You mustn't, indeed, Harry. Attend to your lessons, boys.

HARRY. And where is Grace?

WILDER. Never mind Grace for the present. She's busy. Come and examine this wonderful automaton of mine.

HARRY. Ah, yes! (*Looks intently at SMILES, and starts on recognising him. SMILES signals HARRY to maintain silence.*)

WILDER. Eh? What are you staring at, Harry? It's only Grey the tutor.

HARRY. Oh, nothing. (*Aside.*) If that's not Frank Smiles I'll eat my hat! (*Aloud.*) This what-d'ye-call-it of yours, you were saying.

WILDER. I wish you'd call things by their right names, Harry. It's the motive power for an automaton violinist I am constructing, and I anticipate that when it is finished it will, from the multiplicity and grace of its movements, completely throw into the shade all automata hitherto produced—even Kempelen's Chess Player, which is not an automaton at all, according to Sir David Brewster.

HARRY. I daresay not. (*Yawns.*)

WILDER. By-the-by, Harry, did you ever read that author's "Lectures on Natural Magic?"

HARRY. I can't say I ever did.

WILDER. It's lying about somewhere—a little book. No, it's not in the book-case, for I was looking at it yesterday, and I never replace anything. Where did I leave it? Tut—tut!

HARRY. Oh, never mind, uncle. Don't trouble.

WILDER. But I do mind. I should like you to read it above all things. It discloses an imposition, and I who love truth so much, am very zealous at exposing deceit. Where did I leave it? Ah! I remember—it's in the summer-house. I'll go and fetch it. (*Exit R.*)

SMILES. (*aside to HARRY.*) Wait a moment. (*Aloud.*) Now, boys, you have been so attentive to-day, I shall allow you twenty minutes recess. (*Boys rise.*) Come back at the end of that time, and conclude your lessons.

FRED. Come into the garden with us, Cousin Harry.

CHARLEY. Oh, do!

HARRY. I'll follow directly. Away with you! I won't be long.

(*Exit boys, R.*)

HARRY. Smiles, my dear fellow, what, in the name of mystery, is this? Four months ago you were Frank Smiles, the first comedian of the day, playing to crowded and admiring audiences for I don't know how many pounds a night; and now I find you as Grey the tutor, grubbing away in my uncle's house.

SMILES. At a salary of £80 a year, exactly. Listen to my explanation. Three months ago I joined the Metropolitan Comedy Company in a provincial tour. The sleepy town of Dulborough, about half a mile from here, was by some means, entered on our way-bill. There I encountered my fate in the form of a beautiful young lady. I was smitten at once. By Jove, it was a regular case of love at first sight.

HARRY. About the fiftieth similar case you've experienced.

SMILES. Don't, Harry; it's really a true case this time. I made inquiries, and endeavored to obtain an introduction; without avail, for my enchantress was guarded by a fatherly griffin, who claims to be a philosopher and a man of the world.

HARRY. I begin to see through this now. Your charmer is?

SMILES. Your cousin Grace, and the philosopher aforesaid—

HARRY. My Uncle Wilder, of course. So when you couldn't get an introduction, you—

SMILES. Exactly. Saw an advertisement for a tutor in the "Dulborough Gazette," applied and was successful—in more senses than

one. And when not occupied in teaching the brother to *decline* "Amo," I was teaching the cousin to *accept* my love.

HARRY. With what result?

SMILES. Magnificent! She loves me,—loves me disinterestedly, too; for she only knows me as Grey, the poor tutor.

HARRY. I congratulate you, old boy! (*They shake hands.*) Only marry my Cousin Grace, and I'm indebted to you for life!

SMILES. How?

HARRY. Oh! it's a family matter, too tedious to enter into just now. Our elders have it all arranged that Grace and I shall make a match at some remote period. Now, Grace does not want me; besides, I'm engaged, *sub rosa*, to Clara Jones. Therefore, if you marry Grace, it clears the way for Clara and I.

SMILES. Well, I'm your man, if I can only gain her father's consent; and, as he is a strict lover of truth, I'll endeavor to propitiate him by acknowledging everything.

HARRY. I should certainly do so.

SMILES. If that fails I can turn to stratagem again, and try to cajole a promise from him.

HARRY. If we succeed in that the field is won, for he is so frantically rigid in such matters, that he would rather die than not fulfil a promise to the letter, no matter under what circumstances it might have been made.

SMILES. And yet he deceives himself into the idea that he is a "philosopher, and a man of the world." Poor Wilder! he knows as little about the world as an unhatched chrysalis knows of creation!

HARRY. (*looks R.*)—He's coming with his blessed book! I'll avoid him, and redeem my promise to the lads by slipping into the garden by a roundabout way. Have at him, old boy, and luck attend you!

(*Exit L.*)

*Enter WILDER, with book, R.*

WILDER. I've found it; but it wasn't there. Where's Harry?

SMILES. He's just stepped out.

WILDER. And why are the boys not at lessons?

SMILES. I have dismissed them for a brief recess. I really have something of importance to communicate, Mr. Wilder, if you'll grant me a few minutes attention.

WILDER. Indeed! (*Sits himself.*) What is it?

SMILES. (*aside.*)—Now for it! (*Aloud.*) I wish to ask your permission to marry your daughter Grace.

WILDER. (*rising angrily.*) Goodness gracious. Marry my daughter Grace? You? (*Pause.*) Preposterous! I won't hear of it for a moment.

(*Going L.*)

SMILES. Sir, if poverty is the only obstacle—

WILDER. (*turns.*) But it is not. (*Going.*)

SMILES. If it were, that is easily overcome. Hear me, sir. (*WILDER pauses at door.*) I am not what I appear to be.

WILDER. Then, sir, you are a hypocrite, and as such I detest you. (*Crosses to R. angrily.*)

SMILES. (*aside, clinching his fist.*) No, he is her father; let me not forget that. (*Aloud.*) Sir, I acknowledge I have deceived you in fact. My name is not Grey, nor is teaching my ordinary vocation. I am

an actor—not an obscure one; as my name, Frank Smiles, will vouch and by means of my profession I have acquired wealth enough to——

WILDER. No more! Your wealth shall not bribe me to overlook your wickedness. You are an impostor, sir! You have crept into my house, in a base disguise, to accomplish a base purpose—to steal my daughter from me. (*Crosses L.*)

SMILES. Nay, sir; hear me! What you term a base disguise was simply a lover's stratagem; what——

WILDER. (*interrupting fiercely.*)—A lover's stratagem! 'Twas a hideous deceit—an acted lie! (*Overcome by his anger, he sinks into a chair, and buries his face in his hands. Pause.*)

SMILES. Sir!

WILDER. (*gently raising his head, and speaking in a subdued voice.*) The wonder is how I, a calm philosopher, and a man of the world, could be deceived by such a shallow pretence!

SMILES. And you refuse your consent?

WILDER. Most decidedly! Now let us get to other matters. (*Refers to book on table, and commences writing.*) Hum! Let me see. Your quarter's stipend is due next week.

SMILES. I do not require it, sir.

WILDER. But it is yours. I shall instruct my boys myself for the future. Though they have made tolerable progress under your superintendence, I must say I disagree with your system. You endeavor to teach too much before you cultivate the memory. I shall remedy that by a plan of my own. Here is a check (*hands slip of paper*) for the amount of your quarter's salary. I shall allow you half an hour (*looks at his watch*) to pack your trunk. As soon as that is done, you will quit my house.

SMILES. I shall certainly do so, sir. (*Going L; turns.*) I am, I suppose, to regard your decision as final? You hold out no hope of my ever gaining your consent?

WILDER. (*rising angrily.*) If ever I give you my consent, sir, why—you may have her, that's all! But (*smiling*) you need not imagine there is any hope of that. If you are ever clever enough to deceive me—a philosopher and a man of the world—thrice over, and as effectually as you have hitherto done, I'll—hang it! I'll give you my consent!

SMILES. (*aside.*) A chance yet.

WILDER. That, however, is an impossibility.

SMILES. I must give up all hope. May I not see her for a moment before I go?

WILDER. Certainly not. I'll see her, and lecture her severely for attempting to deceive her old father. After that, I'll give my boys a round of elementary education. You have had my answer. Pack up, and go! (*Exit R.*)

*Enter HARRY, L.*

HARRY. Ah, Frank! I've been waiting for the verdict. What is it, eh?

SMILES. A decided non-suit, Harry. I must be out of the house in half an hour; and, worse than that, I am not permitted to see Grace again. Now, I must see her, if possible, for the purpose of breathing into her ear a little hope—hope which I have gathered from an extraordinary promise her word-keeping father vented in his anger.

HARRY. Indeed! What was it?

SMILES. He said if I remember (*mimicking WILDER*;) "If you are clever enough to deceive me—*me*, a philosopher and a man of the world—thrice over, and as effectually as you've already done, I'll—hang it! I'll consent to your marriage!"

HARRY. Ha—ha! excellent! Well, if you fulfil those conditions, I've no doubt he'll keep his words.

SMILES. I think I can manage it. I must turn my talent for mimicry into account, and, in the first place, adopt some disguise which will enable me to have an interview with Grace. That will, if successful, be deception No. 1. We'll see about the others afterwards. Can you hit upon anything, Harry?

HARRY. I don't know, I'm sure. Let's see. (*Pause.*)

SMILES. (*looking L.*) Ah! who is this strange being?

*Enter THOMAS, L., showing in TWITCH, who carries a pair of boys boots and a shoemaker's measure.*

THOMAS. Step this way, Mr. Twitch. Take a chair. I'll go and tell master you've come. (*Exit R.*)

HARRY. Twitch, how is it your master hasn't come?

TWITCH. Master's main bad to-day, sir, so he told me to bring Master Fred's boots, and take the young lady's measure.

SMILES. What! Miss Grace?

TWITCH. Yes, sir.

SMILES. A brilliant idea! Off with your apron! Quick! Here, I'll give you my coat for it! (*Takes off his coat.*)

TWITCH. What for, sir?

SMILES. Oh, it's only for a lark! Don't wait for reasons. You sha'n't come to any harm by it. Here's half a sovereign. (*HARRY and SMILES hurriedly divest TWITCH of his apron, cap, and muffler.*) Here, put these on. (*SMILES hands TWITCH his coat and hat.*) Now go and sweetheart the barmaid at the "Red Lion!" (*SMILES puts on apron &c.*) Look sharp there's a man!

HARRY. Why, you're metamorphosed already.

SMILES. I've some old wigs and things in my trunk; so, if old Wilder only gives me another half-minute, I'll be rather more so.

(*Runs off L.*)

TWITCH. (*turning round.*) How grand I be! You're sure as I won't come to no harm by this, sir?

HARRY. Not you. Is it likely?

*Enter SMILES, L.; red wig, cap over his eyes, and muffler up to his chin.*

HARRY. Ha! ha! ha! You're another man.

SMILES. The shoes! The measure! (*Seizes them.*) Now be off, Twitch, there's a good fellow. Keep out of the way, and I'll give you a sovereign to-morrow. (*Pushes him off. L.*) He's coming! (*Looks R.*) Now for it! You must back me out, Harry. (*Re-enter TWITCH, L.*)

TWITCH. I forgot; there's summat for Master Fred—

SMILES. (*savagely.*) Get out!

TWITCH. (*shouts.*) It's in one o' the boots.

HARRY. Be off! You'll spoil the fun. (*Pushes him off.*) Just in time, by Jove!

*Enter WILDER and the boys, R. The boys sit behind table, R. C.*

SMILES. If you please, squire, I ha' brought the young gent's boots.

WILDER. Oh, I suppose you're from Patcher's. Why didn't he come himself?

SMILES. Master's main bad with the dumblingo, sir.

WILDER. Dear me! What's that?

SMILES. A sort of roomatiz, I b'leeve, sir. He's so bad he can't hardly walk.

WILDER. Ah! well, just wait a minute. I must attend to the tuition of my boys. (*Gives FRED and CHARLEY each a small book.*) Each of you learn three verses. My tutor has behaved abominably, Harry, so I've dismissed him.

SMILES. Then that 'ud be the gent I met in the road just now.

WILDER. Oh, he's gone, then! A happy riddance!

SMILES. (*aside.*) Very happy. (*Aloud.*) He gi'ed me half a crown, an' told me to take his trunk down to th' "Red Lion"

WILDER. You'll find it in the side room, as you go out. (*Points L.*)

SMILES. Here's your boots, young gemman. (*Aside to FRED.*) It's inside. (*Aloud.*) But about the young lady's boots?

WILDER. Oh yes. Go into the next room, and I'll send her to you. (*Exit SMILES, R.*) Harry, oblige me by telling Grace that the boot-maker has come. I'm busy now.

HARRY. Oh, certainly!

(*Exit R.*)

WILDER. Now, boys, how are you getting on?

FRED. I've learned mine already.

CHARLEY. So have I.

WILDER. You must not scoff at the seeming simplicity of the lessons. Dr. Watts' Hymns are not so difficult to learn as Latin grammar. But I wish you to commit a few lines to memory every day, in order to cultivate retentive mental faculties, of which you both stand in need. Now give me the book. (*Stands up.*) Come forward, and repeat the lines, Frederick.

FRED. (*stands beside chair, C., on which is a loose red cushion, and repeats the following lines in a slipshod manner, meanwhile rolling in his hands a piece of cobbler's wax, which he has abstracted from one of the boots:*)—

"How doth the little busy bee  
Improve each shining hour;  
And gathers—gathers honey all the day,  
From every opening flower.  
"How skillfully she builds her cell,  
How neat she spreads her wax;  
And—and——" (*Pauses*)

CHARLEY. Pa, Fred's got a lump of wax.

FRED. (*puts it hastily on chair cushion.*) Oh, you great story! No, I haven't. (*Shows his hands.*)

WILDER. (*overcome with surprise, sinks into chair, sitting upon the wax.*) I am inexpressibly grieved, boys, to find that you—who have been brought up carefully in the paths of truth—should accuse one another of falsehood in this way. I cannot hear your lessons further just now. I will leave you for a short time, during which you must commit your tasks more firmly to memory. Let me impress upon you to apply yourselves closely, and you will thereby gain what will cling to you afterwards. Of the truth of these words, I, a self-taught philosopher, am a remarkable example. (*Rises and exit slowly L., the cushion sticking to the tail of his coat.\* FRED and CHARLEY exit R.*)

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\*One of the boys, in apparently endeavoring to regain the supposed piece of wax, may fix the cushion by means of a pin.

## ACT II.

SCENE—Same as Act I. HARRY discovered seated, reading newspaper.

WILDER. (*entering L.*) Now, boys—Hallo, Harry! where are the boys?

HARRY. I saw them going into the orchard some time since.

WILDER. Dear me! And I distinctly ordered them to remain and learn that hymn perfectly. But perhaps they had done so previous to their departure. About how long is it since they went?

HARRY. (*looking at his watch.*) I don't know exactly—perhaps an hour ago. It was shortly before the shoemaker left with the tutor's trunk.

WILDER. Hum! I'm afraid they have neglected their lessons, I'll hunt them up. (*Going.*) If they can repeat the lines they may continue their play; otherwise, I will bring them here, and keep them until—

HARRY. Poor old Wilder! I don't think his new educational system works very well. (*Exit R.*)

*Enter THOMAS, L., showing in SMILES, disguised as PROFESSOR JERKPOINTS.*

THOMAS. This way, sir. Take a chair, sir. Mr. Wilder will be here directly. (*Exit R.*)

SMILES. *Oui*; dat is I mean to say "yes." (*Sits.*) The weathare is ver grand to-morning, monsieur.

HARRY. Very. (*Aside.*) A Frenchman, evidently. I wonder what he wants.

SMILES. I think I to see you before have had the honor. I remind your name is Harry Wilder.

HARRY. (*rising.*) I certainly don't remember.

SMILES. (*speaking in his natural tone.*) What! forget an old friend so soon!

HARRY. By Jove! Smiles, this is good!

SMILES. Yes, this is deception No. 2. As Wilder doesn't seem to be coming (*looks R.*) I'll explain the whole thing as concisely as I can. You must know that there is a sort of itinerant show in the town—a travelling museum of curiosities.

HARRY. I remember; I saw it as I drove through this morning. "Sankey's Mammoth Exhibition," I think it's called.

SMILES. Yes, that's the title. Well, since I was here this morning, I've seen through the exhibition, and very amusing it is from one point of view. Among other curiosities, there's a sort of life-size figure on a pedestal, which, on being wound up, went through some remarkable changes of attitude.

HARRY. Indeed! That's just the sort of thing to suit Uncle Wilder.

SMILES. So I though; but unfortunately, or fortunately, which you will, the mainspring snapped as they were winding it up a second time for my special delectation.

HARRY. I should call that decidedly unfortunate.

SMILES. I think it's fortunate, because it clears the way for deception No. 3. (*Looks R.*) Hallo! here's Wilder! I'll tell you the

rest afterwards. Introduce me as Professor Jerkjoints, from Sankey's Mammoth Exhibition.

*Enter WILDER and boys, R.*

WILDER. (*entering.*) I insist on each of you learning that third verse before you leave the room. (*Boys sit at table, R. C.*) Hallo! a stranger!

HARRY. Yes, uncle. This is Professor Jerkjoints, from Sankey's Mammoth Exhibition.

SMILES. Yes, sare. I come to desire if you will be so glad as come to veesit our what you call automatic feegures. I have heard you are clevere—ver' clevere at such works yourself, so I shall be much happy if you will behold what I, a Frenchman, have constructed for Meester Sankey. (*Hands a paper.*) A programme is here of all the wonders to be seen.

WILDER. (*looking at bill, aside.*) "Moving Figures," "Wonderful Automaton, or Mechanical Man." I wouldn't miss it for ten pounds! (*Aloud.*) I shall have great pleasure in visiting the collection, Professor—ah—

SMILES. Professare Jerkjoints, monsieur, scientific what-you-call machinest to Sankey's Mammoth Exhibition.

WILDER. (*to boys.*) You hear, boys? If you are each able to repeat that last verse within five minutes, you shall go with me to the show this afternoon. (*Boys read diligently.*)

SMILES. Ah! ha! good boys—ver' good boys. They will to look at the show be pleased. All for you look out at the exhibition this very morning. *Bon jour, monsieur!*

HARRY. I'll see him out, uncle. This way. (*Exit HARRY and SMILES, L.*)

WILDER. Now, boys.

FRED. I've learned it, *now*.

CHARLEY. So have I.

WILDER. well?

FRED. }

CHARLEY. } (*together.*) "In works—"

WILDER. No—one at a time. You, Fred.

FRED. (*repeats:*)—

"In works of labor, or of skill,  
I would be busy too;  
For Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do."

WILDER. That will do. Now, Charles. (*CHARLES repeats verse correctly.*) Very good. You shall both go with me to the show this afternoon. Now go and play. (*Exeunt R.*)

### ACT III.

SCENE—*A curtain drawn across back of stage. Pedestal L. C. MR.*

SANKEY is talking to SMILES, who is rubbing his face and hands with white powder. A large white sheet, and a short, curly white wig are lying on pedestal.

SANKEY. And you must only move when I pretends to touch the springs, you know.

SMILES. Yes; I know. You'll remember those classical subjects I told you to introduce, Mr. Sankey.

SANKEY. I has 'em here (*points to his head*) all right. But look alive! it's a'most time to open.

SMILES. I'm nearly ready. Where's that wig? Oh, here! (*Puts on wig.*) Oh, if the old gentleman we were talking of asks for Professor Jerkjoins, say he's gone—ill—anything you like! Now the draperies. (*Envelopes himself in sheet, and gets on pedestal.*) Do I look statuesque, eh? (*Noise without.*)

SANKEY. (*going R.*) Wery. Are you ready?

SMILES. Stop! Conceal me till my turn comes, by putting that piece of canvas over my head.

SANKEY. Yes; perhaps it's better.

SMILES. Gently! Don't disarrange the wig, or wipe off the powder, or there'll be a disclosure.

SANKEY. (*placing canvas.*) There, that'll do. (*Going R.*)

SMILES. And, I say, be careful in taking it off.

SANKEY. Hush! I'm going to open. (*Exit R. U. E., as if going up steps.*)

SANKEY. (*without.*) Walk up—walk up! Ladies and gentlemen, walk up and see the most wonderful collection of mechanical curiosities that ever existed in this world. These unequalled figures, ladies and gentlemen, are surpassed by the surprising Tommyton, or mechanical man, the wonder of the collection, which has caused astonishment and delight wherever exhibited!

*Enter WILDER, HARRY, FRED, and CHARLEY, R. U. E.\* They stare about them.*

WILDER. Where is the automaton, I wonder?

CHARLEY. It's a sell! There's nothing to see.

SANKEY. (*without.*) Remember, these wonders may be viewed for the small charge of sixpence; children half-price!

*Enter VILLAGERS, male and female, one or two at a time; among them TWITCH, still dressed in SMILES' hat and coat. Boys may be dressed as women in this scene.*

SANKEY. (*without.*) Walk up—walk up! The lecturer is just going his rounds!

*Enter SANKEY, with long white wand.*

SANKEY. This side (*points R.*) ladies and gentlemen. (*Stands on a low step-ladder, R. U. E., and pretends to remove a blind or curtain. All the spectators gaze off R.*)

VILLAGERS. E-e-e-h!

SANKEY. In this section of the exhibition you behold striking life-size models of all the Kings and Queens of England from William the Fourth down to Queen Victoria. This collection is allowed to be the most beautiful and perfect now travelling. In this division further to the right you behold the "Flowery Land" pirates and murderers, which, for their crimes, were, executed on the scuffle on the 30th of February, eighteen-hundred and something more! Pass on to the

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\* All the characters in this scene enter and exit R. U. E., as though coming down or going up steps. The effect may be obtained by means of a stool at the entrance.

next carriage, ladies and gentlemen. (*Turns and removes curtain at back and discloses half a dozen figures, personated by boys, in fantastic costumes, on a raised platform.*)

VILLAGRES. E-e-e-e-h!

SANKEY. This unequalled group represents six life-like figures, taken from ancient and modern history. Here, to the left, is Napoleon Boneypart, as he appeared when out at Elba!

VILLAGER. (*to TWITCH.*) What did he say?

TWITCH. Out at elbow. Can't you see th' hole in his sleeve?

VILLAGER. Oh! Yes, I see.

SANKEY. Confronting him—which is still allowed to be a remarkable likeness, though the face has met with a haccident—is the Duke of Wellington.

WILDER. Why, it's more like Othello. His face looks as black as if it had been inked!

HARRY. Ah! no doubt that's why he's called Well-inked-'un.

SANKEY. The third figure is an exact model of Brigham Young, the Mormon Chief, as he appeared at the last census, when he was informed that he had thirty-nine wives, and two hundred and sixty-two children living. The visitors to this exhibition are allowed the privilege of supposing that Mr. Young's family is outside, without hextra charge.

VILLAGERS. He! he! he!

SANKEY. The next figure has a peculiar happy resemblance to Professor Darwin, as he appeared when he broke his watch-chain, and was looking for the missing link. The last two figures in this group represent Joe Smikes, the atrocious murderer, and his unfort'nit wictim. Mary Smith, which he lured her into a lonely part of the Strand, and in broad mid-day villinously stabbed her with a toothpick; for which crime he was condemned at the last assizes to transportation for life, for the period of seven years. Hobserve, the deadly weapon is still clutched in his right hand. I will now set the figures in motion, and you will then pereceive them as they appeared when they looked just like this. (*Puts his hands to his mouth and shouts off R. U. E.*) Crank! (*The figures all at once commence to roll their eyes and jerk their heads and arms in a spasmodic and unnatural manner.*) Ladies and gentleman, hobserve the appropriateness and naturalness of the different movements, which fills all beholders with wonder and astonishment. (*Shouts off.*) That'll do, Bill! (*The figures simultaneously stop, and SANKEY draws the curtain.*)

WILDER. But where is the "Mechanical Man," as you call it?

SANKEY. I'm just agoing to exhibit him, sir. (*Places step-ladder c, and removes canvas.*) Ladies and gentlemen, you here behold the wonderful Tommyton, or Mechanical Man, which has been constructed at the cost of ten years' labor, and an enormous sum of money. Your humble servant, the present proprietor, having made a large fortune by exhibiting of it, is anxious to sell this wonderful piece of mechanical art, and retire into private life. The price is placed as ridiculously low as ten pounds—ten pounds, gentlemen, which it cost me ten times that sum to produce it. This classical Tommyton, in its present hattitude, personates Happoller. Hobserve the majesty of its form, the beauty of it's contour, and the graceful pose of the 'ead. By touching this spring with the point of my wand, the figure revolves itself into the hattitude of Stonewall Jackson defying the lightning. (*SMILES raises his right arm in a defiant manner.*)

VILLAGERS. E-e-e-h!

WILDER. I suppose he means Ajax.

SANKEY. The next spring on being touched, shows the character of Murphy, the god asleep. (SMILES drops his arm and closes his eyes.)

WILDER. He means Morpheus, the god of sleep, Harry.

SANKEY. I hear some person in the awjence passin' remarks, as if he wasn't satisfied. Any person unsatisfied with the hentertainment may go to the door, and ax for his money back (*aside*;) and I don't think he'll get it. (*Aloud.*) I now touch the last spring, which throws the figure into the attitude of Lord Brougham driving his son. (SMILES stretches his hands forward.)

WILDER. Oh dear! He means Phæton, driving the Chariot of the Sun.

SANKEY. Ladies and gentlemen, the entertainment is now concluded, hoping you are all satisfied, and will recommend it to your friends and neighbors. (VILLAGERS exit R. U. E.) Any person wishing to become the owner of this wonderful Tommyton will oblige by remaining behind and the matter will be settled in private.

WILDER. I should like to buy it, if only to show my sceptical daughter Grace what may be done in this way by a clever mechanic. Let me see how it works. Oh! here is a spring. (*Touches front of pedestal.* SMILES assumes a boxing attitude, and hits WILDER's hat smartly.) Dear me! it's very violent.

SANKEY. Ha! ha! You shouldn't ha' touched that. That's the spring for Bulger, the prize-fighter.

WILDER. I really think I'd better not have it. It's very violent,

SANKEY. He's quiet as a lamb, sir, if you keep off that spring. You'd better take him.

WILDER. What do you say, Harry?

HARRY. Oh, don't let the opportunity slip. Buy him for Grace. Say she may have him.

WILDER. Ah, very well. (*Takes out purse.*) Here is your ten pounds, Mr. Sankey. I'll take him home for Grace. (*Hands money.*)

SMILES. (*leaping off pedestal, and flinging aside wig, &c.*) Thank you, sir!

WILDER. Goodness gracious! Grey—or whatever your name is—what is the meaning of this? Where is Professor Jerkjoints? He, I am sure, is no party to such a shameful swindle!

SMILES. (*changing his voice.*) Professare Jerkjoints, sare, has heard you are clevere—ver' clevere, and is much happy dat you have behold what he constructed for Meestar Sankey.

WILDER. Gracious powers! Another imposition! You, then, were the strange individual who called himself Professor Jerkjoints?

SMILES. Yes; and also another strange individual who informed you that (*changes voice*) "Maister's main bad to-day, sur. He's got the dumblingo, sur; he can't walk hardly."

WILDER. The shoemaker! Is it possible? Surprise can go no further. You are an adept at character acting, I must confess. Since this morning you have personated—for what earthly purpose I cannot surmise—a shoemaker, a Frenchman, an automaton, and—anything else?

SMILES. No; those are all, and plenty too, for they fulfil the conditions of your challenge.

WILDER. My challenge! What do you mean?

SMILES. Do you not remember saying to me this morning, "If you

are clever enough to deceive me effectually thrice over, I'll give you my daughter"?

WILDER. Dear me! I think I do remember saying something like that; but—

SMILES. No "but's," I pray. I have fulfilled my part of the programme: I call upon you to fulfil yours. Besides this, you, a few minutes since, promised to take me home to Grace.

WILDER. But—hang it! I *will* introduce a "but" if I like—when I consider that Grace's happiness may be wrecked by the fulfilment of that promise, I am more than half inclined to break it.

SMILES. Believe me, sir, Grace's happiness lies in the other scale. It is possible to keep your word, and render your daughter happy at the same time. But there! I fling aside all subterfuge; I release you from an unintentional bond, and again ask you to entrust Grace's future to the keeping of Frank Smiles, an honorable member of an honorable profession.

WILDER. Dear me! that's very straightforward. I like you for that, young man! But I am not the only one who has a right to speak in the matter. Harry, here, I believe, has a sort of claim.

HARRY. Which I relinquish in favor of my old friend. (*Shakes hands with SMILES.*) Not a very noble deed, considering Grace doesn't care for me, and dotes on Frank.

WILDER. Well, if Grace keeps in the same mind, I suppose I mustn't object.

SMILES. Thank you again. Your last speech, Mr. Wilder, strongly reminds me of a sentence always spoken by the stereotyped father or guardian in an old stock-farce towards the tag-end of the piece. I always thought that phase of character very unnatural till now. So doubtless thought the indulgent friends before us, and perhaps they think so yet. (*To audience.*) If however, the actions of the moving figures which have appeared before you, have helped to brighten a dull hour, we shall never regret introducing you among the Scientific and Mechanical Waxworks, Automaton, life-size portraits, moving figures, and natural curiosities collected together in Sankey's Mammoth Exhibition!

FRED, CHARLEY.  
R.

WILDER, SMILES.  
C.

HARRY, SANKEY.  
L.

CURTAIN.

## MR. X.

SCENE.—*A neatly furnished room in HENN'S house. Table with stuffed birds and animals, L. 2 E. Table with papers and books, R. 2 E. Door leading out upon steps into garden, R. U. E.*

JESSIE discovered reading at table, R. MATHILDA, L.

JESSIE (*looking up from paper*). Oh, I say, auntie! (MATHILDA continues reading) I say, auntie. (MATHILDA as before) Auntie, I say! That's three times I've said "I say," auntie.

MATHILDA. Well, what is it you have to say? Be brief. I am deeply interested.

JESS. And so am I. A great deal deeper—auntie, I say. (*aside*, That's four says. (*aloud*) I wonder who the author of this poem is? It's beautiful! Listen.

MATH. Not now, girl; wait till I've finished what I am reading.

JESS. Oh bother your "cruelty to animals papers!" listen to this. This is what I call sentiment. (MATHILDA lays aside her paper unwillingly, and listens.)

JESS. (*reads enthusiastically*).

"A beauteous rose, with lovely tint,  
I see it blooming as of yore;  
The tales of love I once read, in't  
I read once more! I read once more!"

Isn't it lovely?

MATH. (*jeeringly*). Pshaw! Who ever heard of reading tales of love in a rose? (*takes up paper again*) Ridiculous!

JESS. Ridiculous! 'Tisn't either! But I can't expect you to appreciate any tales at all, unless they are dogs' tails, or cats' tails!

MATH. Jessie!

JESS. All I would like to know is the name of the author of these lines. It's so provoking; they're only signed with an X.

MATH. Signed with a what—did you say?

JESS. No, not signed with a what; signed with an X!

MATH. (*suddenly jumping up and crossing, R.*). An X! is it possible? Are you sure it's an X? where is the X? Show me the X!

JESS. Why, here it is. (*aside*) What's the matter now?

MATH. (*eagerly examining the paper*). Yes, it is X! It must be the same one. I'm sure it is! Noble X!

JESS. (*aside*). That X has gone to her head.

MATH. We shall meet him. We must meet him!

JESS. Oh, he's a friend of yours? How jolly!

MATH. A friend, indeed!

JESS. And you'll introduce him?

MATH. Don't be absurd. I don't know him.

JESS. Don't know a friend of yours? (*aside*) I'm sure that X has gone to her head.

MATH. I have many friends whom I do not know.

JESS. You don't mean it! Why don't you get acquainted? Are you afraid they'll stop being your friends when they know you?

MATH. (*sternly*). Jessie!

JESS. (*in the same manner*). Auntie!

MATH. I call the unknown hero *my* friend, because he is the friend of all dumb animals.

JESS. (*laughing*). Oh, I see!

MATH. I have just been reading, in the last issue of "The Animal World" of a gallant rescue of an unfortunate poodle, by a hero named X!

JESS. Named X, too? What a singular coincidence!

MATH. Not singular in the least! I feel assured it is the same person.

JESS. The same person! The poodle-man and the poet?

MATH. Listen. (*reads pathetically*) "The little playful poodle with the curly tail had plunged into the surf, and was swimming along unconscious of the peril that threatened him. In a moment the fatal undertow had seized him——"

JESS. Ah!

MATH. "In another moment he was hastening to his fatal doom! Cries of despair——"

JESS. Oh!

MATH. "Rang forth from his fair owner, who, standing on the shore, had riveted her weeping orbs upon the afflicted poodle, when suddenly a handsome man, heedless of all danger, struck out bravely for the fated animal, caught him by the curly tail on the neck—I should say in the nick, of time, and brought him safely to the feet of his owner!"

JESS. (*sighing relief*). Ah!

MATH. "The stranger's name could not be ascertained, but on the body of his bathing-suit was seen in bold embroidery the letter X."

JESS. The letter X?

MATH. (*speaking*). Yes, the initial of his name. The rescuer of the poodle.

JESS. And the curly tail!

MATH. I love him for his bravery.

JESS. Whom, the poodle?

MATH. (*reprovingly*). X.

JESS. Yes, *my* X! I'm sure it's my X; the poet, X! How I wish I knew him! (*rapturously*.)

*Enter MOLLY, c.*

MOLLY. Please, mum. (*looks vacantly before her.*)

MATH. Well?

MOLLY. Please, mum.

JESS. Well?

MOLLY. Please, mum—(*after a pause*) Oh—I've forgot, mum, what I come in to say, mum. It was something, mum, about something, mum. I'm sure it was something about something, mum. (*trying to collect her thoughts*) But I can't think what it was, mum.

MATH. (*aside, to JESSIE*). We must do something to strengthen that girl's memory. It's getting to be dreadful. Maybe she's heard something about X, and is keeping us in this terrible suspense.

JESS. How annoying ! (*to MOLLY*) Can't you think ?

MOLLY (*catching a fly from her forehead, then gleefully*). Oh, now I know what it was. He! he!

JESS. }  
and } Well ?

MATH. }

MOLLY. Please, mum ; the flies, mum.

JESS. (*turning from her in disgust*). Pshaw!

MATH. The flies ! what does she mean ?

MOLLY. Yes, mum—the flies.

MATH. What about the flies ?

MOLLY. Please, mum, didn't you say as how I should never kill no flies as come into the kitchen ?

MATH. Well ?

MOLLY. An' that it was wrong to harm any living things, mum ? And that I was to open the window every day and let out the flies ?

MATH. Yes ; well ?

MOLLY. Please, mum, I don't think it would be right to open the window to-day, mum, an' let 'em out.

MATH. Why not ?

MOLLY. Cause it's going to rain, and they might catch cold in the damp, mum. Cruelty to animals, mum.

JESS. (*laughing—aside to MATHILDA*). Oh, auntie ! She's got you there.

MOLLY. Please, mum, that's all I had to say.

MATH. Well, then, leave the room, and let the flies take care of themselves !

MOLLY. I wish they would, mum. (*goes to door c., and opens it, then rushes back*) Oh, Lor' ! Here's Mr. Henn coming down stairs in a fearful temper ! Oh, my ! (*HENN heard without* : " Most extraordinary ! most extraordinary ! ") An' he's saying something about ex—ex—ex——

JESS. }  
and } X ?

MATH. }

*Enter HENN, L., holding letter.*

HENN. Traordinary.

[*Exit MOLLY, c.*]

Confound that Tick ! I repeat most pronouncedly and emphatically, without hesitation or limitation, confound that Tick. If there were not ladies present—(*turns to ladies*) I should say, damn that Tick ! He's a fraud of a Tick ! He's only half a Tick ! I don't believe he's any Tick at all, unless it be a lunatic.

JESS. } Father !  
(together) }

MATH. } Brother !

HENN. Yes, father and brother me now as much as possible ! but the point still remains beyond dispute, that Tick is a confounded idiot, and you know it !

JESS. Why, papa, what's the matter ?

HENN. Matter ? You are the matter.

JESS. I ?

HENN. Yes, you ; here's this soft-headed, timid, weak-spirited Tick, who is dying to marry you—who has been courting you for the past—the past—I don't know how many years—and hasn't got spunk, I should say nerve enough to come up to you like a man and tell you that he loves you, doats on you, adores you, worships the very ground you walk upon.

MATH. But maybe he doesn't.

HENN (*not noticing her*). But writes me letters, begging me, imploring

me to tell Miss Jessie that the sincere respect—sincere fiddlesticks—warm affection, and all that sort of thing—and wants me, *me*, to do the talking for him, the stupid donkey wants me to appeal in his behalf. Why, I feel like—

JESS. But he's so bashful, father.

HENN. Bashful! What right has he to be bashful? What right has any man to be bashful? I wasn't bashful when I wanted to marry! I wasn't bashful when I *did* marry! I wasn't bashful after I *was* married! And I'm less bashful now than I ever was.

MATH. That's true enough.

HENN. But I've made up my mind. He'll have to do his own talking, or else do without you. I don't mean to say I would like him to do without you. The fact is, I'd rather do without you myself—a great deal rather. But I've got through encouraging him—if there's any more encouraging to be done, you've got to do it yourself. That's all. (*going.*)

MATH. Brother!

HENN. Well, what's the matter with you?

MATH. If you can drop the present subject for a moment—

HENN. I can't drop anything. I don't feel like dropping.

MATH. (*continuing*). I should like to remind you of that sky-terrier that you promised to have stuffed for me last week.

HENN. Stuff your own terriers—I haven't time.

[*Exit, L.*]

MATH. Oh, the wretch! (*follows him angrily.*)

JESS. (*alone, coming down*). How annoying! I wish poor Mr. Tick would have the courage to speak out. He's the shyest lover I've ever seen, and as chary of his words as though they were drops of gold. I guess that must be owing to his profession. He's a telegraph operator, and all over ten words are charged extra! Poor fellow! When father gets excited it nearly frightens the life out of him—all the little there's in him. That's a fine way indeed to encourage the man. But I can't blame father, either. Who wouldn't be worried with a woman following him all round the house and talking about stuffed terriers all her life?

*Enter MOLLY, C. D.*

MOLLY. Please, mum.

JESS. Well, what is it?

MOLLY. There's a man outside.

JESS. A man!

MOLLY. Yes; a *gentle* man.

JESS. Who is he?

MOLLY. I don't know his name, miss—I never could remember names, miss; but *you* know his name.

JESS. (*aside*). It must be Mr. Tick. (*aloud*) What did he have to say?

MOLLY. Dunno, miss. I asked him if he had anything to say, and he said he didn't have nothing to say.

JESS. It is Mr. Tick. Didn't you say anything to *him*?

MOLLY. I told him, miss, that you was in, and he said "Ah!" and then I said you was alone, and he said "Oh!"

JESS. Why didn't you tell him to step in?

MOLLY. I told him to, miss, and he said—let me think what he said—"maybe he would." (*a gentle tap is heard at door, c.*)

JESS. Hark!

MOLLY. That's him.

JESS. (*loudly*). Come in! (*MOLLY goes to the door and opens it, then exits.*)

TICK (*after hesitating at the door*) enters, and bows.

JESS. How do you do, Mr. Tick?

TICK. Ah—how—do, Miss Jessie?

JESS. Won't you take a seat, Mr. Tick? (*she moves a chair to c.*)

TICK. Think—will—Miss Jessie.

JESS. (*taking a chair and moving it near him*). Speak out, Mr. Tick, don't be afraid.

TICK. 'Fraid. I'm not 'fraid. (*pause*.)

JESS. Well?

TICK. Well. (*taps his knees in imitation of a telegraph key*.)

JESS. Do you wish to see father?

TICK. Yes—no—I mean—(*little bell rings, off L. U. E.* TICK *jumps up, and hurries up stage*.)

JESS. What's the matter?

TICK. (*coming back*). Excuse me—bell—forgot—thought was telegraph.

JESS. (*aside*). It's dreadful!

TICK. Your father! Note.

JESS. If you wish to see my father I'll call him.

TICK. No—please—don't! (*they have both risen, but stand apart*.)

*Enter HENN, L., seeing them.*

HENN (*L., aside*). There he is! The gushing lover. Just look at him. (*aloud*) Halloa, Tick!

TICK (*turning suddenly and going*). Oh, sir!

HENN. So you're here, are you?

TICK. No!

JESS. (*crossing, and whispering to HENN*). Don't frighten him, father. He was getting on splendidly. Try him once more, just to oblige me. (*aloud*) I'll see you again, Mr. Tick! Father wishes to speak to you. (*telegraphs to him over HENN's shoulder, but TICK fails to comprehend*.)

[*Exit JESSIE, L.*]

HENN (*aside*). I'll try to humor him a bit for her sake; but I know he'll drive me wild.

TICK (*gradually composing himself*). Mr. Henn!

HENN. Sir?

TICK. Your daughter—

HENN. My daughter.

TICK. And I—

HENN. And you.

TICK. We both—

HENN. (*becoming impatient*). Well?

TICK. Sincere respect—

HENN. Well?

TICK. Earnest appreciation—

HENN. Well?

TICK. My constant endeavors—

HENN. Well?

TICK. Well—she—I—you know—

HENN (*with sudden vigor, which startles TICK, and makes him retreat up stage*). I know, do I? You're sure I know, do I? Of course I know. Do you? I know everything, do I? Exactly. You mean that after wasting all this time in ridiculous courtship, that was no courtship at all, you are beginning to realize that it's time you began your courtship?

TICK. Yes.

HENN. (*continuing, violently*). You are beginning to realize that my daughter is a very charming young lady—

TICK. Yes!

HENN (*violently*). That she has all the requisite attributes to make a man the sweetest, dearest, brightest, and best little wife that ever trod this earth?

TICK. Yes!

HENN (*very vigorously*). That you would give your bottom dollar and all your worldly possessions, which are precious few, to have her?

TICK. Yes!

HENN (*very sharply*). And that, as you consider yourself fully able to appreciate all her merits, you think she ought to take you, and knowing that you have her father's consent, all that you want is hers?

TICK. Yes!

HENN (*very violently*). You meant all that, did you? (TICK *nods*) Then you blundering old fool! You infernal young blockhead! You spiritless imitation of a man, why didn't you say so? Do you think I am going to put up with a milk and watery sort of a second-hand son-in-law like you? (TICK *has taken his hat and is making for the door*) Clear out of here, and don't you ever show that infernal noddle of yours again! Clear out, sir, this instant! or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life.

TICK. Oh! (*dodges out of door, c.*)

*Enter JESSIE, L.*

JESS. Great Heavens! Father! (MOLLY *heard without*, "Oh, my!")

*Enter MOLLY. HENN paces the stage.*

MOLLY. Lor' a mercy, sir! He's nearly knocked the breath out of me! Wheugh! Sakes alive! What has he stolen? Is it the sky-blue terrier, miss? I'm sure it's the sky-blue terrier!

JESS. (*pacing stage*). Molly, leave the room!

HENN. Molly, clear out!

MOLLY. Lor', sir! I came in to say something, but you've driven it out of my head.

HENN. I'll drive you out with it, in a minute. (*tugs at his hair, and paces the stage. XAVIER heard whistling without.*)

MOLLY. Now I know what it is. It's a man! another man! My, how he can talk, too! He talks as much in a minute as t'other one couldn't do in an hour, if he tried. (XAVIER *heard without*, "Drat that specimen of female species! I wish she'd hurry!")

JESS. A strange voice!

HENN. I can't see him! I won't see him! I'll leave him to you, Jessie. If he wants anything you haven't got, don't give it to him; and if he doesn't, ask him why. Molly, leave the room.

[*Exit HENN, L.*]

MOLLY. What a funny man he is, miss, and he wears a great big ring on his little finger with a cross marked like this on it. (*crosses her fingers like an X.*)

JESS. Great Heavens! it's X!

MOLLY (*frightened*). Who's X? What's X?

JESS. (*aside*). I can't receive him in this dress! (*aloud*) Molly, tell the gentleman to walk in. Say I'll be down directly—don't forget; down directly. Oh, he's come! I must tell auntie. (*hurries off, L.*)

MOLLY (*going to door, c.*). Step this way, sir.

*Enter XAVIER, C. D.*

XAVIER. Oh, my dear, alone? Where is the gentleman? You're sure you've got the name right? Xerxes Xavier, of the Centennial Fire Insurance Company, my dear?

MOLLY. Lor', sir, I couldn't remember all that; an' besides, I didn't have no time to tell 'em your name, they cleared out so suddenly.

XAV. They did? Remarkable! They must be eccentric! I'm quite certain they're eccentric. Ah! (*walks about, sees stuffed animals*) A specimen of their eccentricity. Somebody evidently fond of dogs. (*to MOLLY*) Capital things to insure.

MOLLY. Yes, sir; she *is* dreadful fond of them, and no mistake!

XAV. She! It's a she! A feminine dog fancier! Capital thought! I'll touch her tender chord, and insure her property! (*to MOLLY*) Bright idea, isn't it?

MOLLY. What, sir?

XAV. Touching her property, and insuring her tender chord. I mean insuring her tender chord, and touching her property.

MOLLY. Dunno what you mean, sir. (*aside*) What a funny man!

XAV. (*crossing to other table and handling papers*). Ah, papers and books! Fond of literature, isn't he? Valuable library, no doubt. Capital thing to insure.

MOLLY. Yes, sir; she *does* like poetry and sich.

XAV. She! Another she! What a remarkable congregation of she's! Another capital thought! I'll quote poetry and win her sympathies! Molly, you could be of service to me. Would you like to be?

MOLLY. Dunno, sir. (*coming down*.)

XAV. Well, my dear, take a good look at me. (*MOLLY stares at him*) I'm not so deucedly bad-looking, am I?

MOLLY. I've seen wuss, sir—but not much.

XAV. Thank you, my dear. Now tell me, are the ladies young?

MOLLY. One of them is young, sir—t'other is so-so!

XAV. Which one is so-so?

MOLLY. The old 'un.

XAV. Of course; but one of them is fond of literature—that must be the old one—and the other is fond of animals—that's the young one. Now, Molly, you can serve my purpose very much with the ladies, if you were to represent me as a fascinating young fellow. Don't blush, my dear. You'll only be telling the truth. I *am* fascinating. 'Pon my soul I am. You see, there's nothing like working upon the affections of your sex—they are all affection. If their shoemaker is handsome they'll patronize him. If the minister is good-looking they'll raise his salary. If an actor is pretty, they'll rave over him. All that is necessary is an ounce of their overflowing affection, and my cause is won. You understand me, don't you?

MOLLY. Can't say I do, sir.

XAV. Clear case, my dear, praise my form, grace and flow of speech! Say in your opinion I've come to steal away their hearts, and so on, etcetra. They'll be better prepared to receive me when they hear that. See if they won't

MOLLY (*confusedly*). But, sir!—

XAV. Try it, my love. There's the garden. I'll take a stroll. Be back in a minute! I know you will fix it for me. (*chucking her under the chin*) You're a deuced fine girl! Do you know that? By Jove, you are.

MOLLY. Go along, sir!

XAV. (*kissing her*). I will—in a minute.

[*Exit, R.*]

*Enter HENN—sees kissing.*

HENN. Mercy on us! What's that!

MOLLY. Lor', Mr. Henn!

HENN. I expected to find the stranger conversing with my daughter, and here he is kissing the servant. Molly, what did he want?

MOLLY (*aside*). I've forgot what he did want. (*aloud*) Please, sir, he said — (*aside*) I dunno what he did say, there was so much of it. (*aloud*) He said—(*aside*) I know it was somethin' about stealin' away their hearts. (*aloud*) He said he'd come to steal away their hearts.

HENN (*striking attitude*). What!

MOLLY (*aside*). Now I've done it. I know I was to say that to one of 'em, but I can't remember which.

HENN. What! steal away their hearts! The reprobate! So he begins by kissing you! Just let me catch hold of him! Which way did he go? (*going towards garden*.)

MOLLY. No, sir, please don't hurt him; he's nothing but a faskinatin' fellow.

HENN. A fascinating fellow, indeed! Ah, let me catch him! I'll fascinate him!

*Enter JESSIE, R., followed by MATHILDA.*

JESS. Papa, where is he?

MATH. Brother, where did he go?

MOLLY. I must run and give him warning. [*Exit, into garden.*]

HENN. So you know him, do you? the young reprobate!

MATH. Why, brother, you're excited; about what, pray?

HENN. So you know him, the fascinating fellow?

JESS. (*aside to MATHILDA*). He is fascinating! I knew he was.

HENN. So you know the scapegrace, do you?

JESS. Why, father?

HENN. Come to steal their hearts away, indeed! The impudent rascal! not to mention his kissing the servant!

XAV. (*heard without*). Thank you, my dear, I knew you'd fix it.

MATH. (*to JESSIE*). Calm yourself, my child; let me receive him.

HENN. No; you won't do anything of the sort. Leave the room both of you, (*leads them to the door*) and I'll receive him myself. (*they hesitate, he hurries them off, then turns, facing opposite entrance*)

*Re-enter XAVIER, R., followed by MOLLY.*

XAV. (*seeing HENN, aside, to MOLLY*). Who's that rooster?

MOLLY. Mr. Henn.

XAV. Eh? that rooster a hen? What do you mean? You said nothing about any he's—your he's were all she's!

HENN (*after a pause, comes c., meeting XAVIER*). Well, sir!

XAV. Precisely what I was about to remark. Well, sir? [*Exit MOLLY.*]

HENN. I am particularly anxious to know, sir, what business you have in my house, sir?

XAV. Ah, your house? You don't mean it! Just the man I want to see. Here's my hand, sir! Devilish glad to see you! Mr. Henn, I believe. How are you, Henn?

HENN. Sir?

XAV. Precisely. You want to know who I am—quite natural, too. My name is Xavier, Xerxes Xavier, agent for the Centennial Fire Insurance Co. Like to insure you, sir, to any amount. Doesn't make the slightest difference how large.

HENN. Mr.—what's your name?

XAV. X, for short?

HENN. Well, Mr. X, for short, the long and short of the matter is, that I have nothing whatever to insure, and the sooner you relieve yourself of my presence by leaving the house, the sooner I'll be left alone. Exactly, sir. Good morning, sir.

XAV. Oh! pray, don't hurry yourself—lots of time. I didn't come merely on business—I'm an old friend of the family, though you may not know it. I have just returned from a long journey. I've been all around the world!

HENN. You don't say so.

XAV. I have indeed! I have always cherished a sincere respect for you, Mr. Henn—I have indeed, though you mayn't know it. The rest of your family can tell you so.

HENN. The rest of my family!

XAV. Yes; and in my travels around the world I have gathered quite a variety of curiosities. While I was on the coast—the lower coast, not the upper coast—of, I've forgotten where, I gathered this beautiful specimen of an oyster shell. I said to myself, "This will tickle Henn's fancy! You must keep this for Henn." And I kept it for Henn. (*hands him shell.*)

HENN (*taking it*). You're very kind, sir. But accepting that you have always been a friend of mine, though I never knew of it, I don't think there ever were any oyster-shell feelings between us, sir.

XAV. Ah, perhaps not. But I'd like to insure your house, sir, all the same. You are likely at any moment to catch fire, you know, and then what?

HENN. No matter. When I catch fire I'll let you know. (*going.*)

XAV. Don't hurry yourself. (*suddenly*) Say, Henn, do you know there is something about you that strikes me as very familiar?

HENN. I've no doubt; but I can't wait until you find out what it is.

XAV. I have it. There's something about you that reminds me of the Colloseum at Rome.

HENN. Great Heavens!

XAV. Yes, and there is an undefinable I don't know what about your head that suggest the Tower of London!

HENN (*aside*). He's an idiot!

XAV. There is a peculiar atmosphere about you also that vividly recalls the Champs Elysees!

HENN. And there is something about you that reminds me of a lunatic asylum! [*Exit suddenly, L.*]

XAV. (*alone*). It won't do. The old man's tough! But I'll tackle the ladies! I've got to get them insured, by hook or by crook, or my commission this year won't amount to a row of pins.

*Enter MATHILDA, C. D.*

MATH. Ah, he is alone! How fortunate!

XAV. (*aside*). Ah, the poetic one! (*aloud*) My dear miss—

MATH. (*aside*). He calls me his dear miss! (*aloud*) Sir!

XAV. Excuse this trembling uncertainty of purpose; but being only slightly acquainted with your father—

MATH. Brother, sir.

XAV. Your father's brother, I should say. Being, as I was about to observe, but slightly acquainted with the gentleman, I did not dare hope that an introduction to his charming relative could be so speedily accomplished.

MATH. (*aside*). A remarkably well-spoken young man. (*aloud*) Sir, you flatter me!

XAV. Not at all, madam—miss. I hate flattery; for, as the poet observes—(*aside*) What the devil does the poet observe? (*aloud*) as the poet observes—ah!

“Show me the man who seeks to flatter,  
And he's a fraud—that's what the matter.”

MATH. (*aside*). Ah! he is the poet X; but I must find out about the poodle.

XAV. (*aside*). I scarcely know how to begin about the insurance; it's deucedly awkward.

MATH. Sir, your reputation as a poet has preceded your arrival.

XAV. (*aside*). The deuce it has.

MATH. But it is that other attribute of your nature that I admire most.

XAV. (*aside*). Hallo! this can't be some confidence woman.

MATH. Tell me, sir, are my fondest hopes realized? Did you not—you did—I know you must be he. Did you not rescue the poodle?

XAV. The which-el?

MATH. The poodle.

XAV. (*aside, amazed*). It's a hopeless case. But I must humor her. What can she be driving at? (*aloud*) Oh, yes—don't mention it, pray. Oh, of course; but don't mention it. (*aside*) I don't know what she means, but it's all correct.

MATH. (*aside*). How modest he is! (*aloud*) Sir, you have by that one act of yours entered yourself eternally upon my list of friends.

XAV. How fortunate! (*aside*) I'll make out her policy in less than a minute.

MATH. For the man, be he of high or humble birth, who befriends the dumb brute proves himself alike worthy of my friendship.

XAV. (*aside*). Ah, this's the brute one, not the poetic. I must strike another key. (*aloud*) Madam, you overwhelm me. Little did I dream when I got mixed up in that poodle affair (*MATHILDA starts*) that I should be rewarded by praise from such lips—for to me nothing is holier than charity toward the brute creation. What, I appeal to you, is there more touching than the fidelity of a devoted dog?

MATH. (*enthusiastically*). Or the domesticity of a gentle cat.

XAV. Or the goaheaditiveness of a billy goat!

MATH. Or the honest heroism of the horse!

XAV. Or the calmness of a canal-mule? No, madam, to me nothing—nothing at all can compare with the aforesaid quadrupeds! Therefore I have but one word of advice to bestow—have them insured! Don't delay. The deadly flame may seize the precious darling before its fond mistress dreams of its danger; therefore insure at once. If you haven't any live pets to insure, insure your stuffed ones. It makes no difference to the Company.

MATH. You are right, sir.

XAV. (*continuing*). At any moment, madam, when you least expect it—(*he goes up stage and strikes a match surreptitiously*) when you least expect it, madam, (*lights the paper on the table*) an accident may occur to endanger your property. (*comes down*) Yes, madam, I have known cases where two persons were engaged in harmless conversation, when suddenly a flame shot up—Great Heavens! (*turns to the table*.)

MATH. (*screams in terror*). Oh!

XAV. (*rushing to the table and extinguishing flame*). Saved!

*Enter rapidly, C. D., JESSIE.*

JESS. What's the matter?

MATH. (*in alarm*). Fire!

JESS. Where? (*takes paper*) Oh! (*in despair*) What a pity! Those beautiful lines destroyed!

XAV. (*aside*). What a delicious creature! I must insure her.

JESS. Oh, sir, I am so sorry! They were beautiful. You are a beautiful poet, sir. (XAVIER looks amazed) Ah! I know them by heart! Excuse my enthusiasm, sir, but they are really beautiful. (*recites inspiringly*)

“A beauteous rose with lovely tint,  
I see it blooming as of yore;  
The tales of love I once read, in't  
I read once more. I read once more!”

XAV. (*aside*). Another hopeless case! this must be a family of lunatics.

MATH. You see, sir, your reputation has preceded you both as a humanitarian and a poet.

JESS. Especially as a poet.

XAV. A poet, by all means. But——

JESS. (*interrupting him*). Can you not recite something now? Something of your own as beautiful as those lines? (*very gushingly*.)

XAV. (*aside*). I'd like to accommodate her, she's so deucedly good-looking! but I'm blessed if I know how.

MATH. Do, sir!

XAV. Ah, but I need inspiration! There's the garden! Let us into the garden, perhaps resting on the greensward and fanned by gentle zephyrs 'neath softly sighing trees, the muse will be kindled.

JESS. (*aside*). How romantic! (*they walk towards garden, XAVIER in centre*.)

XAV. But first I must snatch the brightest inspiration of them all from those rosy lips.

JESS. Is it absolutely necessary?

XAV. Couldn't manage without. (*kisses her*.)

*Enter MOLLY.*

JESS. (*quickly*). But don't do it to auntie; she'll get angry.

MATH. (*severely*). I'm fully able to take care of myself, miss.

[*Exeunt all but MOLLY.*

MOLLY (*looking after them, then whistling in amazement*). My! ain't he goin' it! I must tell t'other one. Maybe it'll stir him up a bit. (*opening C. D., and calling*) You may come in; there ain't nobody here.

*Enter TICK, timidly, C. D.*

TICK. Where's Mr. Henn?

MOLLY. Dunno! But I'd a-thought you wouldn't care much about seeing him after running away with the sky-blue terrier this morning.

TICK. Molly, you're wild. Want to see Mr. Henn.

MOLLY. He's not here; but if you want to see Miss Jessie, she's walking in the garden with a faskinating fellow—who's just been a-kissing her like sixty!

TICK (*jumping in amazement*). Eh! What! Where's Sixty? Who? (*hurries up R., and looks off*.)

*Enter HENN, L., down front, holding papers.*

HENN. What a remarkable coincidence! There's this daughter of

mine been telling me about a Mr. X., who writes poetry and saves poodk dogs, and the paper contains a letter from a winner of a prize in the Havana lottery, signed X, who has won a hundred thousand dollars! There can't be such a lot of exes! The name's too uncommon. It must be the same man. I'll have to cultivate him! By Jove! I'll hunt him up and begin by apologizing. (*goes up.*)

TICK (*to MOLLY*). What's he doing now? Look at him!

MOLLY. Dunno; looks like as if he was kissing her again.

HENN. There's that confounded Tick. (*TICK turns, sees HENN, is rather nervous, but composes himself.*)

TICK (*R. C.*). Mr. Henn, I've come back. [*Exit MOLLY, C. D.*]

HENN (*pushing him aside*). Get out of the way! [*Exit into garden.*]

TICK. What does he mean! What does everybody mean? Can't stand that sort of thing! Perfectly ridiculous! (*walks up, R., looks off, then comes down again. Repeats this business several times*) Can't stand it! Won't stand it! Got to stop it! How stop it? That's the trouble. Molly! (*calling*) Molly!

*Re-enter MOLLY.*

MOLLY. Well, sir!

TICK. What's *his* name?

MOLLY. Whose?

TICK. Damn rascal.

MOLLY. Dunno.

TICK. What *do* you know?

MOLLY. Dunno.

TICK. Dang it!

MOLLY. They calls him X! I heerd them say X! But I dunno if that's his name. Funny kind of name, X!

TICK (*suddenly*). I have it!

MOLLY. Eh?

TICK. I have it! (*pause*) I have it! (*pause*) I have it!

[*Exit suddenly, C. D.*]

MOLLY. He's got it bad.

[*Exit, C. D.*]

*Re-enter, from garden, HENN and XAVIER, followed by the ladies. HENN and XAVIER come down, ladies cross to R.*

HENN (*very warmly*). My dear friend, my very dear friend, I insist upon it! There's no getting out of it! You *must*! And when I say you must, you know you must! Indeed you must! We have plenty of rooms in the house, and it will afford me the greatest pleasure in the world to let you have one of them. (*suddenly*) You aren't married, are you, old boy?

XAV. Not in the slightest.

HENN. Certainly not, you don't look as if you were. Fine girl, isn't she?

XAV. (*pretending*). Which one?

HENN (*poking him in the ribs*). Too thin, X! Won't do, X! Too thin entirely. But you've got to come and board with us; there's no getting out of it.

XAV. But really, sir! Now, look here, sir! It's perfectly absurd. (*aside*) What the deuce is the meaning of this sudden hospitality? (*aloud*) I couldn't think of such a thing. Now my baggage—

HENN. I'll send for your baggage. That's all right.

XAV. (*aside*). He'd have a long way to send. (*aloud*) But, my dear sir, (*aside*) What the deuce does the old man mean by first wanting to turn

me out, and then wanting to turn me in? (*aloud*) But it can't be done, sir!

HENN. It's got to be done, I insist upon it. I'll see to your baggage at once.

XAV. Hang it! no! (*aside*) I'll have to go and buy a satchel across way. (*aloud*) No, if I'm to stay here, I'll look after my own baggage!

HENN. Will you, indeed! at once?

XAV. At once. But how about that insurance policy?

HENN. I'll have you make it out when you get back. Go at once.

XAV. A policy at last! Will you excuse me, ladies? Good-bye, Henn. Don't forget the policy. I'll be back in a minute. Don't forget the policy, Henn! Au revoir, ladies! [*Exit, c. D.*]

MATH. What a splendid man, isn't he?

JESS. Isn't he?

[*Exeunt, L. D.*]

HENN. I guess I've got him. A hundred thousand dollars, by Jupiter! [*Exit, L. D.*]

*Enter MOLLY, c. D., holding telegram.*

MOLLY. I'm sure things is getting in the awfulest mixed-uppedest condition in this house that I ever seen. Here's one man goes off in a rush, and t'other one comes in with a rush and gives me this telegraph, and says something about "hurry up, give it to the first one you come across,"—and goodness knows what else. I'm sure it's askin' too much of me to remember all that stuff and nonsense.

*Enter, rapidly, c. D., XAVIER with a satchel.*

XAV. Who the deuce is that fellow standing in front of the door? He looked at me when I came in as though he took me for a burglar. (*to MOLLY*) Say, Mary Ann!

MOLLY. Molly, if you please, sir.

XAV. Well, then, Molly, if you please, sir. Who in thunder is that scarecrow standing in front of the door?

MOLLY. That's t'other one, sir.

XAV. Which other one?

MOLLY. Miss Jessie's other one.

XAV. (*aside*). What does the girl mean? Can she be another one of the lunatic family?

MOLLY (*aside*). I forgot what he told me to do with this! But I guess it's all right. (*aloud*) Here, take this. I don't want it. (*gives him telegram*) [*Exit, c. D.*]

XAV. (*takes the telegram and drops satchel*). No name! that's strange! (*opens it*) Hallo! Great Heavens! what's this! "Murder! Man killed his wife in a tenement house! name unknown! Only clue letter X stitched on shirt front found in his trunk. Tracked to Henn's house! Beware!" Great God! (*runs down front, tears his hair*) This must be a conspiracy! It's that stranger's work! I'll strangle him! (*makes for c. D.*)

*Enter HENN, c. D.*

HENN. Halloa! Back again! Where are you going? What's the matter! Speak! (*drags him down and grasps telegram with one hand, reads.*)

*Enter, L. D., JESSIE and MATHILDA.*

HENN. What! Murderer! (*clutches him tightly by the collar with other hand.*)

JESS. } (coming L. C.). What's the matter ?  
 MATH }

XAV. Let me go ! (HENN drags him from L. to R.)

*Enter TICK, followed by MOLLY.*

MOLLY. There's the man what I gave it to. (*pointing to XAVIER.*)

TICK. You idiot ! (*screaming very loud*) Did I say it was for him ?

MOLLY. Dunno. I've forgot.

HENN. A murderer ! Can it be possible ! Quick ! somebody examine his baggage ! (*MOLLY opens satchel. A number of sticks and stones fall out. General tableau of amazement.*)

XAV. (*struggling*). Let me speak !

HENN. This baggage yours ? (*screaming*) Where are your hundred thousand dollars ?

XAV. I never had any. You're all lunatics ! (*breaks loose and rushes for TICK, who runs over to the ladies.*)

HENN. The murderer ! (*catches him and clutches him again.*)

XAV. Let me alone, and I will explain all. (*HENN releases him, but stands guarding him ; XAVIER draws a full breath*) Wheugh ! (*aside*) I had to fill my satchel with something to make it heavy, and that's ruined me. (*aloud, indignantly*) Sir, sir, I repeat ! Allow me first and foremost to remark, sir, that I am not the man you take me for, sir ; no, sir.

MATH. I feel it ! I know it ! Speak ! you are not the X who saved the poodle ?

XAV. Damn the poodle ! Did I ever say I was, madam ?

JESS. (*in despair*). You did not write those beautiful verses ?

XAV. I couldn't if I tried.

HENN. But you *are* a murderer !

XAV. I'll be hanged if I am ! There is a mistake, sir. A gigantic mistake. A blooming, blatant, blustering, black-and-tan blunder, sir ! I'm no other than I always claimed to be—Agent for the Centennial Fire Insurance Co., and confound it, sir—

HENN. Then what is the meaning of this telegram ?

TICK (*coming down L. of HENN*). I can explain.

ALL. You ! you !

XAV. (*first making a rush for him, then checking himself*). No ; if he explains I'll forgive him.

TICK. I heard he was trying to steal away only woman ever loved ; spoil his little game—sent that telegram ! own invention ! (*general expression of wonder.*)

HENN (*after a pause, laughing violently*). Ha, ha, Tick ! Dang it, Tick ! I wouldn't have thought it of you ! Ho, ho, ho !

TICK. No, sir ; wouldn't have thought it of myself. (*JESSIE joins him.*)

HENN (*crossing to XAVIER*). X, you scoundrel, I'll forgive you ; I don't precisely know what to forgive you for, but it's a good thing to do. But for Heaven's sake, don't ever come into this family again to kick up such another row.

XAV. I won't ! I'll make out your policy, and take leave immediately.

TICK. Mr. Henn. won't you forgive me too while you're at it ?

JESS. If *he* won't I will.

HENN. That settles it.

MOLLY. Will you forgive *me*, sir ? I know I've done something I hadn't oughter done, but I can't remember what it was. (*TICK takes her by the ear and leads her off, then returns to JESSIE*)

MATH. (*to XAVIER*). Before you go, sir, I want to ask you one question—if you are not the X that saved the poodle?

JESS. And wrote those verses?

HENN. And won that money?

TICK (*laughing*). And killed his wife?

MATH. Then tell me, sir—are you any X at all?

XAV. (c). I am; very much of an X, madam—a double X, in fact. X represents an unknown quantity, madam, and there are likewise an unknown quantity of X's, madam!

ALL (*convinced*). Oh—h! (*they exchange looks among themselves, and then with the audience.*)

R.  
HENN.

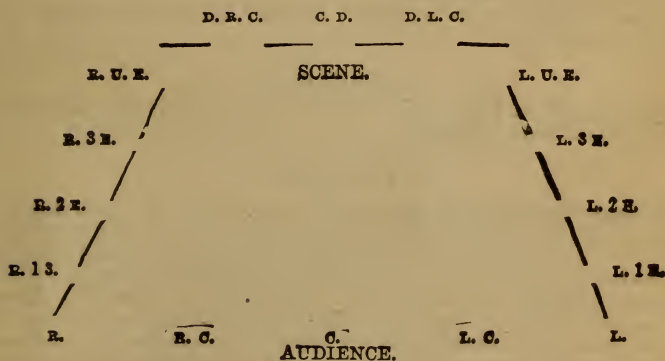
C.  
XAVIER.

L. C.  
MATHILDA. L.  
TICK. JESSIE.

CURTAIN.

### EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Actor is supposed to face the Audience.



L. Left.  
L. C. Left Centre.  
L. 1 E. Left First Entrance.  
L. 2 E. Left Second Entrance.  
L. 3 E. Left Third Entrance.  
L. U. E. Left Upper Entrance  
(wherever this Scene may be.)  
D. L. C. Door Left Centre.

C. Centre.  
R. Right.  
R. 1 E. Right First Entrance.  
R. 2 E. Right Second Entrance.  
R. 3 E. Right Third Entrance.  
R. U. E. Right Upper Entrance.  
D. R. C. Door Right Centre.

*CAST OF CHARACTERS.*

Mr. ANTHONY HENN.

Mr. XERXES XAVIER (Insurance Agent).

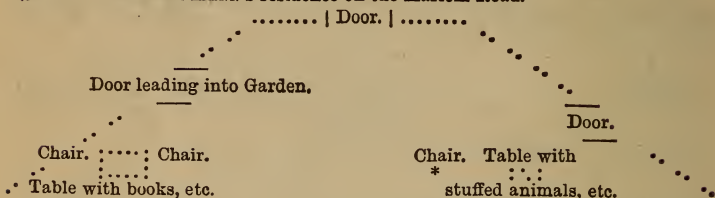
Mr. JOSHUA TICK (a Telegraph Operator).

Miss MATHILDA HENN (Anthony's sister).

Miss JESSIE HENN (Anthony's Daughter).

MOLLY (the maid with a treacherous memory).

SCENE.—Room in HENN's residence on the Harlem Road.

*COSTUMES (Modern).*

HENN.—Black body coat ; white vest ; standing collar.

XAVIER.—Close-fitting gray-black suit.

TICK.—Walking costume.

MATHILDA.—Prim house dress.

JESSIE.—1st Dress : Bright house dress. 2d Dress : More showy than first.

MOLLY.—Maid's dress.

*PROPERTIES.*

Stuffed animals on table ; papers, books, etc. ; small oyster shell ; satchel filled with sticks and stones ; telegram.

*SYNOPSIS.*

THIS farce shows how an insurance agent is mistaken first for a poet, then for a humanitarian, then for the winner of a lottery prize, and finally for a murderer. The names of all these characters are indicated by the letter X ; and Mr. XAVIER, who comes to the house of Mr. ANTHONY HENN, is immediately pounced upon by the various members of HENN's household in the belief that he is the X. JESSIE, the daughter, excited over an unknown poet, X., immediately "sets her cap" for XAVIER, much to the discomfiture of her devoted though ludicrously timid lover, Mr. JOSHUA TICK, a telegraph operator. Miss MATHILDA HENN, ANTHONY's sister, an old maid, "the friend of all dumb animals," having heard of the gallant rescue of a poodle dog by a bather, on whose dress the letter X was embroidered, goes into ecstasies over the insurance agent, and bewilders him with her laudations. Excessively comical situations occur here ; old HENN, after trying to repel XAVIER, learns that a man with the initial X. has won a great prize in the lottery. He therefore changes his plans, and becomes extravagantly hospitable. TICK, the lover, aroused to jealousy by XAVIER's success, sends a fictitious telegram to HENN's house, bearing the news that a murderer, X., had been tracked to HENN's house. A sudden alarm takes place, and poor XAVIER, dumbfounded by the variety of manifestations that have been made towards him, is now seized as the culprit. Here, amid general hilarity, an explanation ensues. A great portion of the merriment is due to the maid, MOLLY, whose treacherous memory is constantly causing confusion. The action of this farce is extremely lively, and all the characters are of importance.

[For Stage Directions see page 17.]

# WON BACK.

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Six male, four female, characters. A play written in the same vein as "Held by the Enemy," "Shenandoah," "Across the Potomac," and other great New York successes. Mr. Tayleur has written many successful plays for Maggie Mitchell, Frank Chanfrau, and others, but this striking picture of the stirring times of the Great Rebellion surpasses them all. Costumes, civil and military of the period. Scenes, two interiors, and one landscape with Confederate camp, easily managed. Time of playing, two hours and thirty minutes.

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## SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

ACT I.—Drawing-room, Arlington, Washington—1860.

"Whom first we love, you know, we seldom wed ;  
Time rules us all : and life indeed is not  
The thing we planned it out, ere hope was dead,  
And then, we women cannot choose our lot."

In fetters—The rivals—North and South—The coy widow—A noted duelist—An old affection—The dismissal—The rivals meet—"You shall answer for this"—Farewell.

ACT II—Same Scene—1860.

"Who might have been—Ah, *what*, I dare not think !  
We all are changed. God judges for the best.  
God help us do our duty, and not shrink,  
And trust in Heaven humbly for the rest.

Broken ties—A Vassar girl's idea of matrimony—A Washington savage—Schooling a lover—Affairs of honor—The Northern fire-eater—The missing challenge—Betrothed.

ACT III.—Drawing-room in New York Hotel—1861.

"With bayonets slanted in the glittering light  
With solemn roll of drums,  
With starlit banners rustling wings of night,  
The knightly concourse comes."

To arms! To arms!—Stand by the flag—A woman's duty—A skirmish in the parlor—On to Richmond—Reunited—The passing regiment.

ACT IV.—Confederate Camp at Winchester—1864.

"No more shall the war cry sever, or the winding river be red ;  
They banish our anger forever, when they laurel the graves of our dead."

A coward's armor—A hand to hand struggle—Hugh captured—Sentenced to be shot—A ministering angel—Harold King's revenge—The attack on the camp—Death of King—After the battle—Won Back.

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## SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

### ACT I.

Twilight in San Juan Mountains.

A poor lone creetur—The coyote's howl—Courting of Minerva Jobson—The dumb boy appears—Sale of the mine—Hiding the money—Jimmie's rescue—Put up your hands!—March!—Two love scenes—The robbery—A cry for help!—The murder—"Who has done this?"

### ACT II.

Foot of Monument Rock, Black Canon.

Midnight in the Black Canon—The Vigilantes—Bring on the prisoner—The accusation—"I am innocent!"—The trial—Circumstantial evidence—A blackleg's oath—Ruth's testimony—Lynch law—Jimmie to the rescue—The noose cut—The escape.

### ACT III.

Mouth of the "Little Ruth" Mine.

Tom Dalton with song—Spriggs the bard—"Is it loaded?"—Mrs. Fireworks—"Fire away"—The sheriff in disguise—The papers in the case—Andrews appears—The plot thickens—The explosion in the mine—"Who will save them!"—"No man can!"—"Then a woman will!"—Andrews the hero.

### ACT IV.

A Room in Mrs. Spriggs' House.

Spriggs despondent—The comic singer, with song and dance—Ruth alone—The storm—The silent witness again—The murder out—A terrible struggle—Just in time—The tables turned—"Down the Black Canon!"—Saved!—"There's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream."

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### SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

#### ACT I.

Home of one of the Shannon boys—"The ould b'y fly away wid Phil"—The new landlord—"Any insult in telling you I love you?"—Sergeant Swift—Molly's answer—Nolan tells the latest news—A basket of eggs—"You're an insolent cur"—The dance—Sir Richard presents a medal—The missing letter—"You will be court-martialed and shot"—Tableau.

#### ACT II.

The road to Limerick—"Who goes there?"—Shannon boys to the rescue—Phil escapes—"We must take him dead or alive"—His meeting with Molly—Sir Richard engages a footman—Appearances must be kept up—The footman keeps his eyes and ears open—"Oh, the scoundrels!"—Rescue of Molly—Tableau.

#### ACT III.

Reception at Col. Dixon's—Helen is warned—"Oh, no you won't, Capt. Forbes!"—The footman discloses his identity—"What farce is this?"—The captain shown to be a villain—"I was there, you see!"—Surrenders his sword and dies by his own hand—Tableau—Molly's home—"Three cheers for Phil Swift and his bride!"—Col. Dixon's acknowledgments—Phil's promotion—Chimes and dance.

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**SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.**

**ACT I.**

England—Down in the Shires—An Irishman's soliloquy—The great race—Young Cecil's appeal—The forged note—Foul play—The favorite poisoned—A criminal offence—A steeple-chase for liberty.

**ACT II.**

Algiers—The barracks—After twelve years—The child of the regiment—A soldier of France—A familiar face—Black Hawk roused—Nora's flirtation—Capture of the Arab chief's daughter—Dispatches from headquarters.

**ACT III.**

Algiers—The hotel—The nest of the "Silver Pheasant"—Rake and Nora stand guard—"You are my brother!"—The broken chain—The vivandiere—"I could kill you, and I will!"—The cross disgraced—The insult—"You lie, and you know you lie!"—The blow.

**ACT IV.**

The camp in the desert—Condemned to death—A momentous sunrise—No reprieve—Cigarette rides for life—A last farewell—"I am ready give your signal"—A pardon!—"You have given your life for mine"—Death of Cigarette.

# \* JACK LONG \*

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#### ACT I.—Frontier Settlement in Texas.

Distant view of the rolling prairie by sunrise—The “horse thieves” and regulators—The never-miss shot—The Yankee trader riled—Border match-making—The threats of malice.  
The stolen steed.

#### THE BARBECUE AND SHOOTING GROUNDS.

The follow-my-leader bullets—The judgment of Squire Lynch—The flagellation—The vow of vengeance—The free fight—“In one see the doom of all”—Tableau.

#### ACT II.—Cypress Swamp in the Cross Timbers.

The pirates of the prairie on the lookout—The peddler and his fate—The dread pursuer—Ben Small’s store—The “norther”—The terrors of the tornado—The fugitive criminal—The shot in the eye!

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The maniac hunter—The regulator’s remorse.

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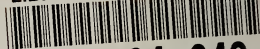
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Scenery—City street, showing R. R. Station; rocky pass, with set cabins; a wood scene, and two plain interiors. Costumes of the day. Time of playing, two and a half hours.

### SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS.

#### ACT I.—Entrance to Railroad Station.

Looking for a victim—Joe Ruggles—"Them galoots is worse than grizzlies"—"Morning papers"—Madge and Bess plying their trades—"Can't you sing Joe a song?"—Hamilton and his pal confer—Tom Howarth gains important information—"Don't you dare to lay hands on us!"—Hamilton tries to maintain his authority—"Who? Old Joe!"

#### ACT II.—Doomsday's Hotel, Dare-devil's Gulch, California.

The landlord secures a guest—Hans disappointed—"Dot is a misdake"—A ghost story—The "Kid and his sister"—"Did I hurt your highness?"—Hans and Doomsday have another talk—Kate Laurel meets the young miner—"Yah, dot vas vot I t'inks"—Madge's disguise penetrated—She recognizes an old enemy—"Now, George Smith, take your choice"—Joe Ruggles as a tramp—"Ef yer think yer can pick on me because I'm han'some ye'll find me ter hum"—Hamilton appears—"Those two youngsters are mine"—The tramp takes a hand.

#### ACT III.—Wood Scene.

A lively ghost—Hamilton and Smith plan more villainy—Old Joe thinks of turning detective—Kate Laurel again—"There is a secret connected with my life"—Kate's confession—"What do you mean, sir!"—Tom Howarth once more—"Vos you looking for a hotel?"—Planning an abduction—Old Joe as an Irishman—"Phat does yez want wid me?"—Undertakes to be a detective—Takes a hand in the abduction—"Do it at your peril!"

#### ACT IV.

Hans hears, and tells, the latest news—"I nefer believed dot spook peesness"—Kate Laurel astonished—Hamilton attempts flight—"De poys haf got Mr. Hamilton, und dey vill gif him a necktie barty"—Arrest of Smith—"Get out mit ny vay, I vas de United States Mail"—Tom meets his old friend under new circumstances—"Do you want me, Tom?"—Old Joe gives consent—A happy ending.

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